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A ROMANY OF THE SNOWS







A ROMANY OF THE SNOWS


The MC Co.

A Romany of the Snows

SECOND SERIES OF
AN ADVENTURER OF THE NORTH BEING
A CONTINUATION OF PIERRE AND HIS
PEOPLE AND THE LATEST EXISTING
RECORDS OF PRETTY PIERRE

BY

GILBERT PARKER

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Three Commandments in the Vulgar Tongue

I

"Read on, Pierre," the sick man said, doubling the corner of the wolf-skin pillow so that it shaded his face from the cradle.

Pierre smiled to himself, thinking of the unusual nature of his occupation, raised an eyebrow as if to some one sitting at the other side of the fire,—though the room was empty save for the two,—and went on reading:

"*Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the sea; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters!*

"*The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.*

"*And behold at eveningtide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us.*"

The sick man put up his hand, motioning for silence, and Pierre, leaving the Bible open, laid it at his side. Then he fell to studying the figure on the couch. The body, though reduced by a sudden illness, had an appearance of late youth, a firmness of mature manhood; but the hair was grey, the beard was grizzled; and the face was furrowed and seamed as though the man had lived a long, hard life. The body seemed thirty years old, the head sixty; the man's exact age was forty-five. His most singular characteristic was a fine, almost spiritual intelligence, which showed in the dewy brightness of the eye, in the lighted face, in the cadenced definiteness of his speech. One would have said, knowing nothing of him, that he was a hermit, but again, noting the firm, graceful outlines of of his body, that he was a soldier. Within the past twenty-four hours he had had a fight for life with one of the terrible "colds" which, like an unstayed plague, close up the course of the body, and carry a man out of the hurly-burly, without pause to say how much or how little he cares to go.

Pierre, whose rude skill in medicine was got of hard experiences here and there, had helped him back into the world again, and was himself now a little astonished at acting as Scripture

reader to a Protestant invalid. Still, the Bible was like his childhood itself always with him in memory, and Old Testament history was as wine to his blood. The lofty tales sang in his veins: of primitive man, adventure, mysterious and exalted romance. For nearly an hour, with absorbing interest, he had read aloud from these ancient chronicles to Fawdor, who held this post of the Hudson's Bay Company in the outer wilderness.

Pierre had arrived at the Post three days before, to find a half-breed trapper and an Indian helpless before the sickness which was hurrying to close on John Fawdor's heart and clamp it in the vice of death. He had come just in time. He was now ready to learn, by what ways the future should show, why this man, of such unusual force and power, should have lived at a desolate post in Labrador for twenty-five years.

"This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us—" Fawdor repeated the words slowly, and then said: "It is good to be out of the restless world. Do you know the secret of life, Pierre?"

Pierre's fingers unconsciously dropped on the Bible at his side, drumming the leaves. His eyes wandered over Fawdor's face, and presently

he answered, "To keep your own commandments."

"The ten ?" asked the sick man, pointing to the Bible.

Pierre's fingers closed the book. "Not the ten, for they do not fit all; but one by one to make your own, and never to break—*comme ça!*"

"The answer is well," returned Fawdor; "but what is the greatest commandment that a man can make for himself ?"

"Who can tell? What is the good of saying, 'Thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath day,' when a man lives where he does not know the days? What is the good of saying, 'Thou shalt not steal,' when a man has no heart to rob, and there is nothing to steal? But a man should have a heart, an eye for justice. It is good for him to make his commandments against that wherein he is a fool or has a devil. Justice, that is the thing."

"'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour'?" asked Fawdor softly.

"Yes, like that. But a man must put it in his own words, and keep the law which he makes. Then life does not give a bad taste in the mouth."

"What commandments have you made for yourself, Pierre?"

The slumbering fire in Pierre's face leaped up. He felt for an instant as his father, a chevalier of France, might have felt if a peasant had presumed to finger the orders upon his breast. It touched his native pride, so little shown in anything else. But he knew the spirit behind the question, and the meaning justified the man.

"Thou shalt think with the minds of twelve men, and the heart of one woman," he said, and paused.

"Justice and mercy," murmured the voice from the bed.

"Thou shalt keep the faith of food and blanket." Again Pierre paused.

"And a man shall have no cause to fear his friend," said the voice again.

The pause was longer this time, and Pierre's cold, handsome face took on a kind of softness before he said, "Remember the sorrow of thine own wife."

"It is a good commandment," said the sick man, "to make all women safe whether they be true—or foolish."

"The strong should be ashamed to prey upon the weak. Pshaw! such a sport ends in nothing. Man only is man's game."

Suddenly Pierre added: "When you thought

you were going to die, you gave me some papers and letters to take to Quebec. You will get well. Shall I give them back? Will you take them yourself?"

Fawdor understood: Pierre wished to know his story. He reached out a hand, saying, "I will take them myself. You have not read them?"

"No. I was not to read them till you died —*bien?*" He handed the packet over.

"I will tell you the story," Fawdor said, turning over on his side, so that his eyes rested full on Pierre.

He did not begin at once. An Esquimaux dog, of the finest and yet wildest breed, which had been lying before the fire, stretched itself, opened its red eyes at the two men, and, slowly rising, went to the door and sniffed at the cracks. Then it turned and began pacing restlessly around the room. Every little while it would stop, sniff the air and go on again. Once or twice, also, as it passed the couch of the sick man, it paused, and at last it suddenly rose, rested two feet on the rude headboard of the couch, and pushed its nose against the invalid's head. There was something rarely savage and yet beautifully soft in the dog's face, scarred as it was by the whips of earlier owners. The sick

man's hand went up and caressed the wolfish head. "Good dog, good Akim!" he said softly in French. "Thou dost know when a storm is on the way; thou dost know, too, when there is a storm in my heart."

Even as he spoke a wind came crying round the house, and the parchment windows gave forth a soft booming sound. Outside, Nature was trembling lightly in all her nerves; belated herons, disturbed from the freshly frozen pool, swept away on tardy wings into the night and to the south; a herd of wolves trooped by the hut, passed from a short, easy trot, to a low, long gallop, devouring, yet fearful. It appeared as though the dumb earth were trying to speak, and the mighty effort gave it pain, from which came awe and terror to living things.

So, inside the house, also, Pierre almost shrank from the unknown sorrow of this man beside him, who was about to disclose the story of his life. The solitary places do not make men glib of tongue; rather, spare of words. They whose tragedy lies in the capacity to suffer greatly, being given the woe of imagination, bring forth inner history as a mother gasps life into the world.

"I was only a boy of twenty-one," Fawdor said from the pillow, as he watched the dog

noiselessly travelling from corner to corner, "and I had been with the Company three years. They had said that I could rise fast; I had done so. I was ambitious; yet I find solace in thinking that I saw only one way to it,—by patience, industry and much thinking. I read a great deal, and cared for what I read; but I observed also, that in dealing with men I might serve myself and the Company wisely.

"One day the governor of the Company came from England, and with him a sweet lady, his young niece, and her brother. They arranged for a tour to the Great Lakes, and I was chosen to go with them in command of the boatmen. It appeared as if a great chance had come to me, and so said the factor at Lachine on the morning we set forth. The girl was as winsome as you can think, not of such wonderful beauty, but with a face that would be finer old than young; and a dainty trick of humour had she as well. The governor was a testy man; he could not bear to be crossed in a matter; yet, in spite of all I did not think he had a wilful hardness. It was a long journey, and we were set at our wits to make it always interesting; but we did it somehow, for there were fishing and shooting, and adventure of one sort and another, and the lighter things, such as singing

and the telling of tales, as the boatmen rowed the long river.

"We talked of many things as we travelled, and I was glad to listen to the governor, for he had seen and read much. It was clear he liked to have us hang upon his tales and his grand speeches, which seemed a little large in the mouth; and his nephew, who had a mind for raillery, was now and again guilty of some witty impertinence; but this was hard to bring home to him, for he could assume a fine childlike look when he pleased, confusing to his accusers. Towards the last he grew bolder, and said many a biting thing to both the governor and myself, which more than once turned his sister's face pale with apprehension, for she had a nice sense of kindness. Whenever the talk was at all general, it was his delight to turn one against the other. Though I was wary, and the girl understood his game, at last he had his way,

I knew Shakespeare and the Bible very well, and, like most bookish young men, phrase and motto were much on my tongue, though not always given forth. One evening, as we drew to the camp-fire, a deer broke from the woods and ran straight through the little circle we were making, and disappeared in the bushes by the riverside. Someone ran for a rifle; but the gov-

ernor forbade, adding, with an air, a phrase with philosophical point. I, proud of the chance to show I was not a mere backwoodsman at such a sport, capped his aphorism with a line from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline.*

"'Tut, tut!' said the governor smartly: 'you haven't it well, Mr. Fawdor; it goes this way,' and he went on to set me right. His nephew at that stepped in, and, with a little disdainful laugh at me, made some galling gibe at my 'distinguished learning.' I might have known better than to let it pique me, but I spoke up again, though respectfully enough, that I was not wrong. It appeared to me all at once as if some principle were at stake, as if I were the champion of our Shakespeare, so will vanity delude us.

"The governor—I can see it as if it were yesterday—seemed to go like ice, for he loved to be thought infallible in all such things as well as in great business affairs, and his nephew was there to give an edge to the matter. He said, curtly, that I would probably come on better in the world if I were more exact and less cock-a-hoop with myself. That stung me, for not only was the young lady looking on with a sort of superior pity, as I thought, but her brother was murmuring to her under his breath with a pro-

voking smile. I saw no reason why I should be treated like a schoolboy. As far as my knowledge went it was as good as another man's, were he young or old, so I came in quickly with my reply. I said that his excellency should find me more cock-a-hoop with Shakespeare than with myself. 'Well, well,' he answered, with a severe look, 'our Company has need of great men for hard tasks.' To this I made no answer, for I got a warning look from the young lady, —a look which had a sort of reproach and command too. She knew the twists and turns of her uncle's temper, and how he was imperious and jealous in little things. The matter dropped for the time; but as the governor was going to his tent for the night, the young lady said to me hurriedly, 'My uncle is a man of great reading —and power, Mr. Fawdor. I would set it right with him, if I were you.' For the moment I was ashamed. You cannot guess how fine an eye she had, and how her voice stirred one! She said no more, but stepped inside her tent; and then I heard the brother say over my shoulder, 'Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud!' Afterwards, with a little laugh and a backward wave of the hand, as one might toss a greeting to a beggar, he was gone also, and I was left alone."

Fawdor paused in his narrative. The dog had lain down by the fire again, but its red eyes were blinking at the door, and now and again it growled softly, and the long hair at its mouth seemed to shiver with feeling. Suddenly through the night there rang a loud, barking cry. The dog's mouth opened and closed in a noiseless snarl, showing its keen, long teeth, and a ridge of hair bristled on its back. But the two men made no sign or motion. The cry of wild cats was no new thing to them.

Presently the other continued: "I sat by the fire and heard beasts howl like that, I listened to the river churning over the rapids below, and I felt all at once a loneliness that turned me sick. There were three people in a tent near me; I could even hear the governor's breathing; but I appeared to have no part in the life of any human being, as if I were a kind of outlaw of God and man. I was poor; I had no friends; I was at the mercy of this great Company; if I died there was not a human being who, so far as I knew, would shed a tear. Well, you see I was only a boy, and I suppose it was the spirit of youth hungering for the huge, active world and the companionship of ambitious men. There is no one so lonely as the young dreamer on the brink of life.

"I was lying by the fire. It was not a cold night, and I fell asleep at last without covering. I did not wake till morning, and then it was to find the governor's nephew building up the fire again. 'Those who are born great,' said he, 'are bound to rise.' But perhaps he saw that I had had a bad night, and felt that he had gone far enough, for he presently said, in a tone more to my liking, 'Take my advice, Mr. Fawdor; make it right with my uncle. It isn't such fast rising in the Company that you can afford to quarrel with its governor. I'd go on the other tack; don't be too honest.' I thanked him, and no more was said; but I liked him better, for I saw that he was one of those who take pleasure in dropping nettles more to see the weakness of human nature than from malice.

"But my good fortune had got a twist, and it was not to be straightened that day; and because it was not straightened then it was not to be at all; for at five o'clock we came to the post at Lachine, and here the governor and the others were to stop. During all the day I had waited for my chance to say a word of apology to his excellency, but it was no use; nothing seemed to help me, for he was busy with his papers and notes, and I also had to finish up my reports. The hours went by, and I saw my

chances drift past. I knew that the governor held the thing against me, and not the less because he saw me more than once that day in speech with his niece. For she appeared anxious to cheer me, and indeed I think we might have become excellent friends had our ways run together. She could have bestowed her friendship on me without shame to herself, for I had come of an old family in Scotland, the Sheplaws of Canfire, which she knew, as did the governor also, was a more ancient family than their own. Yet her kindness that day worked me no good, and I went far to make it worse, since, under the spell of her gentleness, I looked at her far from distantly, and at the last, as she was getting from the boat, returned the pressure of her hand with much interest. I suppose something of the pride of that moment leaped up in my eye, for I saw the governor's face harden more and more, and the brother shrugged an ironical shoulder. I was too young to see or know that the chief thing in the girl's mind was regret that I had so hurt my chances; for she knew, as I saw only too well afterwards, that I might have been rewarded with a leaping promotion in honour of the success of the journey. But though the boatmen got a gift of money and tobacco and spirits, nothing came to me save the formal

thanks of the governor, as he bowed me from his presence.

"The nephew came with his sister to bid me farewell. There was little said between her and me, and it was a long, long time before she knew the end of that day's business. But the brother said, 'You 've let the chance go by, Mr. Fawdor. Better luck next time, eh? And,' he went on, 'I'd give a hundred editions the lie, but I 'd read the text according to my chief officer. The words of a king are always wise while his head is on,' he declared further, and he drew from his scarf a pin of pearls and handed it to me. 'Will you wear that for me, Mr. Fawdor?' he asked; and I, who had thought him but a stripling with a saucy pride, grasped his hand and said a God-keep-you. It does me good now to think I said it. I did not see him or his sister again.

"The next day was Sunday. About two o'clock I was sent for by the governor. When I got to the Post and was admitted to him, I saw that my misadventure was not over. 'Mr. Fawdor,' said he coldly, spreading out a map on the table before him, 'you will start at once for Fort Ungava, at Ungava Bay, in Labrador.' I felt my heart stand still for a moment, and then surge up and down, like a piston-rod under a

sudden rush of steam. 'You will proceed, now,' he went on, in his hard voice, 'as far as the village of Pont Croix. There you will find three Indians awaiting you. You will go on with them as far as Point St. Saviour and camp for the night, for if the Indians remain in the village they may get drunk. The next morning at sunrise, you will move on. The Indians know the trail across Labrador to Fort Ungava. When you reach there, you will take command of the Post and remain till further orders. Your clothes are already at the village. I have had them packed, and you will find there also what is necessary for the journey. The factor at Ungava was there ten years; he has gone—to heaven.'

"I cannot tell what it was held my tongue silent, that made me only bow my head in assent and press my lips together. I knew I was pale as death, for as I turned to leave the room I caught sight of my face in a little mirror tacked on the door, and I hardly recognized myself.

"'Good-day, Mr. Fawdor,' said the governor handing me the map. 'There is some brandy in your stores; be careful that none of your Indians get it. If they try to desert, you know what to do.' With a gesture of dismissal he turned, and began to speak with the chief trader.

"For me, I went from that room like a man

condemned to die. Fort Ungava in Labrador,—a thousand miles away, over a barren, savage country, and in winter, too; for it would be winter there immediately. It was an exile to Siberia, and far worse than Siberia; for there are many there to share the fellowship of misery, and I was likely to be the only white man at Fort Ungava. As I passed from the door of the Post, the words of Shakespeare which had brought all this about sang in my ears." He ceased speaking, and sank back wearily among the skins of his couch. Out of the enveloping silence Pierre's voice came softly:

"Thou shalt judge with the minds of twelve men, and the heart of one woman."

II

"The journey to the village of Pont Croix was that of a man walking over graves. Every step sent a pang to my heart,—a boy of twenty-one, grown old in a moment. It was not that I had gone a little lame from a hurt got on the expedition with the governor, but my whole life seemed suddenly lamed. Why did I go? Ah, you do not know how discipline gets into a man's bones,—the pride, the indignant pride of obedience. At that hour I swore that I should

myself be the governor of that Company one day,—the boast of loud-hearted youth. I had angry visions, I dreamed absurd dreams, but I did not think of disobeying. It was an unheard-of journey at such a time, but I swore that I would do it, that it should go into the records of the Company.

"I reached the village, found the Indians, and at once moved on to the settlement where we were to stay that night. Then my knee began to pain me. I feared inflammation; so in the dead of night I walked back to the village, roused a trader of the Company, got some liniment and other trifles, and arrived again at St. Saviour before dawn. My few clothes and necessaries came in the course of the morning, and by noon we were fairly started on the path to exile.

"I remember that we came to a lofty point on the St. Lawrence just before we plunged into the woods, to see the great stream no more. I stood and looked back up the river towards the point where Lachine lay. All that went to make the life of a Company's man possible was there; and there, too, were those with whom I had tented and travelled for three long months,—eaten with them, cared for them, used for them all the woodcraft that I knew. I could not

think that it would be a young man's lifetime before I set eyes on that scene again. Never from that day to this have I seen the broad, sweet river where I spent the three happiest years of my life. I can see now the tall shining heights of Quebec, the pretty, wooded Island of Orleans, the winding channel, so deep, so strong. The sun was three-fourths of its way down in the west, and already the sky was taking on the deep red and purple of autumn. Somehow, the thing that struck me most in the scene was a bunch of pines, solemn and quiet, their tops burnished by the afternoon light. Tears would have been easy then. But my pride drove them back from my eyes to my angry heart. Besides, there were my Indians waiting, and the long journey lay before us. Then, perhaps because there was none nearer to make farewell to, or I know not why, I waved my hand towards the distant village of Lachine, and, with the sweet maid in my mind who had so gently parted from me yesterday, I cried, 'Good-bye, and God bless you.'"

He paused. Pierre handed him a wooden cup, from which he drank, and then continued:—

"The journey went forward. You have seen the country. You know what it is: those bare

ice-plains and rocky unfenced fields stretching to all points, the heaving wastes of treeless country, the harsh frozen lakes. God knows what insupportable horror would have settled on me in that pilgrimage had it not been for occasional glimpses of a gentler life—for the deer and caribou which crossed our path. Upon my soul, I was so full of gratitude and love at the sight that I could have thrown my arms round their necks and kissed them. I could not raise a gun at them. My Indians did that, and so inconstant is the human heart that I ate heartily of the meat. My Indians were almost less companionable to me than any animal would have been. Try as I would, I could not bring myself to like them, and I feared only too truly that they did not like me. Indeed, I soon saw that they meant to desert me,—kill me, perhaps, if they could, although I trusted in the wholesome and restraining fear which the Indian has of the great Company. I was not sure that they were guiding me aright, and I had to threaten death in case they tried to mislead me or desert me. My knee at times was painful, and cold, hunger, and incessant watchfulness wore on me vastly. Yet I did not yield to my miseries, for there entered into me then not only the spirit of endurance, but something of that sacred pride in

suffering which was the merit of my Covenanting forefathers.

"We were four months on that bitter travel, and I do not know how it could have been made at all, had it not been for the deer that I had heart to eat and none to kill. The days got shorter and shorter, and we were sometimes eighteen hours in absolute darkness. Thus you can imagine how slowly we went. Thank God, we could sleep, hid away in our fur bags, more often without a fire than with one,—mere mummies stretched out on a vast coverlet of white, with the peering, unfriendly sky above us; though it must be said that through all those many, many weeks no cloud perched in the zenith. When there was light there was sun, and the courage of it entered into our bones, helping to save us. You may think I have been made feeble-minded by my sufferings, but I tell you plainly that, in the closing days of our journey, I used to see a tall figure walking beside me, who, whenever I would have spoken to him, laid a warning finger on his lips; but when I would have fallen, he spoke to me, always in the same words. You have heard of him, the Scarlet Hunter of the Kimash Hills. It was he, the Sentinel of the North, the Lover of the Lost. So deep did his words go into my

heart that they have remained with me to this hour."

"I saw him once in the White Valley," Pierre said, in a low voice. "What was it he said to you?"

The other drew a long breath, and a smile rested on his lips. Then, slowly, as though liking to linger over them, he repeated the words of the Scarlet Hunter:

"'O son of man, behold!
If thou shouldst stumble on the nameless trail,
The trail that no man rides,
Lift up thy heart,
Behold, O son of man, thou hast a helper near!

"'O son of man, take heed!
If thou shouldst fall upon the vacant plain,
The plain that no man loves,
Reach out thy hand,
Take heed, O, son of man! strength shall be given thee!

"'O son of man, rejoice!
If thou art blinded even at the door,
The door of the Safe Tent,
Sing in thy heart,
Rejoice, O son of man, thy pilot leads thee home!'

"I never seemed to be alone after that — call it what you will, fancy or delirium. My head was so light that it appeared to spin like a

star, and my feet were so heavy that I dragged the whole earth after me. My Indians seldom spoke. I never let them drop behind me, for I did not trust their treacherous natures. But in the end, as it would seem, they also had but one thought, and that to reach Fort Ungava; for there was no food left — none at all. We saw no tribes of Indians and no Esquimaux, for we had not passed in their line of travel or settlement.

"At last I used to dream that birds were singing near me — a soft, delicate whirlwind of sound; and then bells all like muffled silver rang through the aching, sweet air. Bits of prayer and poetry I learned when a boy flashed through my mind; equations in algebra; the tingling scream of a great buzz-saw; the breath of a racer as he nears the post under the crying whip; my own voice dropping loud profanity, heard as a lad from a blind ferryman; the *boom! boom!* of a mass of logs as they struck a house on a flooding river and carried it away. . . .

"One day we reached the end. It was near evening, and we came to the top of a wooded knoll. My eyes were dancing in my head with fatigue and weakness, but I could see below us, on the edge of the great bay, a large hut, Esquimaux lodges and Indian tepees

near it. It was the Fort, my cheerless prison-house."

He paused. The dog had been watching him with its flaming eyes; now it gave a low growl, as though it understood and pitied. In the interval of silence the storm without broke. The trees began to quake and cry, the light snow to beat upon the parchment windows, and the chimney to splutter and moan. Presently, out on the bay they could hear the young ice break and come scraping up the shore. Fawdor listened a while, and then went on, waving his hand to the door as he began: "Think! this, and like that always, the ungodly strife of nature, and my sick disconsolate life."

"Ever since?" asked Pierre.

"All the time."

"Why did you not go back?"

"I was to wait for orders, and they never came."

"You were a free man, not a slave."

"The human heart has pride. At first, as when I left the governor at Lachine, I said, "I will never speak; I will never ask nor bend the knee. He has the power to oppress; I can obey without whining — as fine a man as he.'"

"Did you not hate?"

"At first, as only a banished man can hate.

I knew that if all had gone well I should be a man high up in the Company, and here I was, living like a dog in the porch of the world, sometimes without other food for months than frozen fish; and for two years I was in a place where we had no fire — lived in a snow-house, with only blubber to eat. And so year after year — no word!"

"The mail came once every year from the world?"

"Yes, once a year the door of the outer life was opened. A ship came into the bay, and by that ship I sent out my reports. But no word came from the governor, and no request went from me. Once the captain of that ship took me by the shoulders, and said, 'Fawdor, man, this will drive you mad. Come away to England — leave your half-breed in charge — and ask the governor for a big promotion.' He did not understand. Of course I said I could not go. Then he turned on me — he was a good man — and said, 'This will either make you madman or saint, Fawdor.' He drew a Bible from his pocket and handed it to me. 'I've used it twenty years,' he said, 'in evil and out of evil, and I've spiked it here and there; it's a chart for heavy seas, and may you find it so, my lad.'

"I said little then; but when I saw the sails of his ship round a cape and vanish, all my pride and strength were broken up, and I came in a heap to the ground, weeping like a child. But the change did not come all at once. There were two things that kept me hard."

"The girl?"

"The girl, and another. But of the young lady after. I had a half-breed whose life I had saved. I was kind to him always; gave him as good to eat and drink as I had myself; divided my tobacco with him; loved him as only an exile can love a comrade. He conspired with the Indians to seize the Fort and stores, and kill me if I resisted. I found it out."

"Thou shalt keep the faith of food and blanket," said Pierre. "What did you do with him?"

"The fault was not his so much as of his race and his miserable past. I had loved him. I sent him away; and he never came back."

"Thou shalt judge with the minds of twelve men, and the heart of one woman."

"For the girl. There was the thing that clamped my heart. Never a message from her or her brother. Surely they knew, and yet never, thought I, a good word for me to the governor. They had forgotten the faith of food

and blanket. And she — she must have seen that I could have worshiped her had we been in the same way of life. Before the better days came to me I was hard against her; hard and rough at heart."

"Remember the sorrow of thine own wife." Pierre's voice was gentle.

"Truly, to think hardly of no woman should be always in a man's heart. But I have known only one woman of my race in twenty-five years!"

"And as time went on?"

"As time went on, and no word came, I ceased to look for it. But I followed that chart spiked with the captain's pencil, as he had done it in season and out of season, and by and by I ceased to look for any word. I even became reconciled to my life. The ambitious and aching cares of the world dropped from me, and I stood above all — alone in my suffering, yet not yielding. Loneliness is a terrible thing. Under it a man —"

"Goes mad or becomes a saint — a saint!" Pierre's voice became reverent.

Fawdor shook his head, smiling gently. "Ah no, no. But I began to understand the world, and I loved the north, the beautiful hard north!"

"But there is more?"

"Yes, the end of it all. Three days before you came I got a packet of letters, not by the usual yearly mail. One announced that the governor was dead. Another —"

"Another?" urged Pierre —

—"was from Her. She said that her brother, on the day she wrote, had by chance come across my name in the Company's records, and found that I had been here a quarter of a century. It was the letter of a good woman. She said she thought the governor had forgotten that he had sent me here — as now I hope he had, for that would be one thing less for him to think of when he set out on the journey where the only weight a man carries is the packload of his sins. She also said that she had written to me twice after we parted at Lachine, but had never heard a word, and three years afterwards she had gone to India. The letters were lost, I suppose, on the way to me, somehow — who can tell? Then came another thing, so strange, that it seemed like the laughter of the angels at us. These were her words: 'And dear Mr. Fawdor, you were *both* wrong in that quotation, as you no doubt discovered long ago.' Then she gave me the sentence as it is in *Cymbeline*. She was right, quite right; we were both wrong. Never

till her letter came had I looked to see. How vain, how uncertain and fallible is man!"

Pierre dropped his cigarette and stared at Fawdor. "The knowledge of books is foolery," he said, slowly. "Man is the only book of life. Go on."

"There was another letter from the brother, who was now high up in the Company, asking me to come to England, and saying that they wished to promote me far, and that he and his sister, with their families, would be glad to see me."

"She was married, then?"

The rashness of the suggestion made Fawdor wave his hand impatiently. He would not reply to it. "I was struck down with all the news," he said. "I wandered like a child out into a mad storm. Illness came; then you, who have nursed me back to life. . . . And now I have told all."

"Not all, *bien sur*. What will you do?"

"I am out of the world; why tempt it all again? See how those twenty-five years were twisted by a boy's vanity and a man's tyranny!"

"But what will you do?" persisted Pierre. "You should see the faces of women and children again. No man can live without that sight, even as a saint."

Suddenly Fawdor's face was shot over with a storm of feeling. He lay very still, his thoughts busy with a new world which had been disclosed to him. "Youth hungers for the vanities," he said, "and the middle-aged for home." He took Pierre's hand. "I will go," he added. "A door will open somewhere for me."

Then he turned his face to the wall. The storm had ceased, the wild dog huddled quietly on the hearth, and for hours the only sound was the crackling of the logs as Pierre stirred the fire.

Little Babiche

"No, no, m'sieu' the governor, they did not tell you right. I was with him, and I have known Little Babiche fifteen years — as long as I've known you. . . . It was against the time when down in your world there they have feastings, and in the churches the grand songs and many candles on the altars. Yes, Noël, that is the word — the day of the Great Birth. You shall hear how strange it all was — the thing, the time, the end of it."

The governor of the great Company settled back in a chair, his powerful face seamed by years, his hair grey and thick still, his keen, steady eyes burning under shaggy brows. He had himself spent long solitary years in the wild fastnesses of the north. He fastened his dark eyes on Pierre, and said: "Monsieur Pierre, I shall be glad to hear. It was at the time of Noël — yes?"

Pierre began: "You have seen it beautiful and cold in the north, but never so cold and beautiful as it was last year. The world was white

with sun and ice; the frost never melting, the sun never warming — just a glitter, so lovely, so deadly. If only you could keep the heart warm, you were not afraid. But if once — just for a moment — the blood ran out from the heart and did not come in again, the frost clamped the doors shut, and there was an end of all. Ah, m'sieu', when the north clinches a man's heart in anger there is no pain like it — for a moment."

"Yes, yes; and Little Babiche?"

"For ten years he carried the mails along the route of Fort Ste. Mary, Fort O' Glory, Fort St. Saviour, and Fort Perseverance within the circle — just one mail once a year, but that was enough. There he was with his Esquimaux dogs on the trail, going and coming, with a laugh and a word for anyone that crossed his track. 'Good-day, Babiche!' 'Good-day, m'sieu'!' 'How do you, Babiche?' 'Well, thank the Lord, m'sieu'!' 'Where to and where from, Babiche?' 'To the Great Fort by the old trail, from the Far-off River, m'sieu'.' 'Come safe along, Babiche?' '*Merci*, m'sieu'; the good God travels north, m'sieu'.' 'Adieu, Babiche!' 'Adieu, m'sieu'!' That is about the way of the thing, year after year. Sometimes a night at a hut or a post, but mostly alone — alone except for the dogs. He

slept with them, and they slept on the mails — to guard: as though there should be highwaymen on the Prairie of the Ten Stars! But no! it was his way, m'sieu'. Now and again I crossed him on the trail, for have I not traveled to every corner of the north? We were not so great friends, for — well, Babiche is a man who says his *aves*, and never was a loafer, and there was no reason why he should have love for me; but we were good company when we met. I knew him when he was a boy down on the Chaudière, and he always had a heart like a lion — and a woman. I had seen him fight; I had seen him suffer cold, and I had heard him sing.

"Well, I was up last fall to Fort St. Saviour. Ho, how dull was it! Macgregor, the trader there, has brains like rubber. So, I said, I will go down to Fort O' Glory. I knew some one would be there — it is nearer the world. So I started away with four dogs and plenty of jerked buffalo, and so much brown brandy as Macgregor could squeeze out of his eye! Never, never, was there such days — the frost shaking like steel and silver as it powdered the sunlight, the white level of snow lifting and falling, and falling and lifting, the sky so great a travel away, the air which made you cry out with pain one minute and gave you joy the next. And all so

wild, so lonely! Yet I have seen hanging in those plains cities all blue and red, with millions of lights showing, and voices, voices everywhere, like the singing of soft masses. After a time in that cold up there you are no longer yourself — no. You move in a dream.

"*Eh bien*, m'sieu', there came, I thought, a dream to me one evening — well, perhaps one afternoon, for the days are short — so short, the sun just coming over a little bend of sky, and sinking down like a big orange ball. I come out of a tumble of little hills, and there over on the plains I saw a sight! Ragged hills of ice were thrown up, as if they'd been heaved out by the breaking earth, jutting here and there like wedges — like the teeth of a world. *Alors*, on one crag, shaped as an anvil, I saw what struck me like a blow, and I felt the blood shoot out of my heart and leave it dry. I was for a minute like a pump with no water in its throat to work the piston and fetch the stream up. I got sick and numb. There on that anvil of snow and ice I saw a big white bear, one such as you shall see within the Arctic Circle. His long nose fetching out towards the bleeding sun in the sky, his white coat shining. But that was not the thing — there was another. At the feet of the bear was a body, and one

clawed foot was on that body — of a man. So clear was the air, the red sun shining on the face as it was turned towards me, that I wonder I did not at once know whose it was. You cannot think, m'sieu', what that was like — no. But all at once I remembered the Chant of the Scarlet Hunter. I spoke it quick, and the blood came creeping back in here." He tapped his chest with his slight forefinger.

"What was the chant?" asked the governor, who had scarce stirred a muscle since the tale began.

Pierre made a little gesture of deprecation. "Ah, it is perhaps a thing of foolishness, as you may think—"

"No, no. I have heard and seen in my day," urged the governor.

"So? Good. Yes, I remember; you told me years ago, m'sieu'. . . .

"'The blinding Trail and Night and Cold are man's: mine is the trail that finds the Ancient Lodge. Morning and Night, they travel with me; my camp is set by the pines, its fires are burning — are burning. The lost, they shall sit by my fires, and the fearful ones shall seek, and the sick shall abide. I am the Hunter, the Son of the North; I am thy lover where no man may love thee. With me thou shalt journey, and thine the Safe Tent.'

"As I said, the blood came back to my heart. I turned to my dogs and gave them a cut with the whip to see if I dreamed. They sat back and snarled, and their wild red eyes, the same as mine, kept looking at the bear and the quiet man on the anvil of ice and snow. Tell me, can you think of anything like it?— the strange light, the white bear of the Pole, that has no friends at all except the shooting stars, the great ice plains, the quick night hurrying on, the silence — such silence as no man can think! I have seen trouble flying at me in a hundred ways, but this was different — yes. We come to the foot of the little hill. Still the bear not stir. As I went up, feeling for my knives and my gun, the dogs began to snarl with anger, and for one little step I shivered, for the thing seems not natural. I was about two hundred feet away from the bear when it turned slow round at me, lifting its foot from the body. The dogs all at once come huddling about me, and I dropped on my knee to take aim, but the bear stole away from the man and come moving down past us at an angle, making for the plain. I could see his deep shining eyes, and the steam roll from his nose in long puffs. Very slow and heavy, like as if he see no one and care for no one, he shambled down, and in a

minute was gone behind a boulder. I ran on to the man —"

The governor was leaning forward, looking intently, and said now, "It's like a wild dream — but the north! — the north is near to the Strangest of All!"

"I knelt down and lifted him up in my arms, all a great bundle of furs and wool, and I got my hand at last to his wrist. He was alive. It was Little Babiche! Part of his face was frozen stiff. I rubbed out the frost with snow, and then I forced some brandy into his mouth — good old H. B. C. brandy — and began to call to him: 'Babiche! Babiche! Come back, Babiche! The wolf's at the pot, Babiche!' That's the way to call a hunter to his share of meat. I was afraid, for the sleep of cold is the sleep of death, and it is hard to call the soul back to this world. But I called, and kept calling, and got him on his feet, with my arm around him. I gave him more brandy, and at last I almost shrieked in his ear. Little by little I saw his face take on the look of waking life. It was like the dawn creeping over white hills and spreading into day. I said to myself, What a thing it will be if I can fetch him back! For I never knew one to come back after the sleep had settled on them. It is too comfortable — all pain gone, all

trouble, the world forgot, just a kind weight in all the body, as you go sinking down, down to the valley, where the long hands of old comrades beckon to you, and their soft, high voices cry, "*Hello! hello-o!*"

Pierre nodded his head towards the distance, and a musing smile divided his lips on his white teeth. Presently he folded a cigarette, and went on —

"I had saved something to the last, as the great test; as the one thing to open his eyes wide, if they could be opened at all. *Alors*, there was no time to lose, for the Wolf of Night was driving the red glow-worm down behind the world, and I knew that when darkness came altogether— darkness and night — there would be no help for him. *Mon Dieu!* how one sleeps in the night of the north, in the beautiful wide silence! . . . So, m'sieu', just when I thought it was the time, I called: 'Corinne! Corinne!' Then once again I said, 'P'tite Corinne! P'tite Corinne! Come home! come home! P'tite Corinne!' I could see the fight in the jail of sleep. But at last he killed his jailer; the doors in his brain flew open, and his mind came out through his wide eyes. But he was blind a little and dazed, though it was getting dark quick. I struck his back hard, and spoke loud from a song that we

used to sing on the Chaudière — Babiche and all of us, years ago. *Mon Dieu!* how I remember those days!

"'Which is the way that the sun goes?
The way that my little one come.
Which is the good path over the hills?
The path that leads to my little one's home —
To my little one's home, m'sieu', m'sieu'!'

"That did it. 'Corinne, ma p'tite Corinne!' he said; but he did not look at me — only stretch out his hands. I caught them, and squeeze them, and shook him, and made him take a step forward; then I slap him on the back again, and said loud, 'Come, come, Babiche, don't you know me? See, Babiche, the snow's no sleeping-bunk, and a polar bear's no good friend.' 'Corinne!' he went on, soft and slow. 'Ma p'tite Corinne!' He smiled to himself; and I said, 'Where've you been, Babiche? Lucky I found you, or you'd have been sleeping till the Great Mass.' Then he looked at me straight in the eyes, and something wild shot out of his. His hand stretched over and caught me by the shoulder, perhaps to steady himself, perhaps because he wanted to feel something human. Then he looked round slow — all round the plain, as if to find something. At that moment a little of the sun crept back, and looked up over the wall

of ice, making a glow of yellow and red for a moment; and never, north or south, have I seen such beauty — so delicate, so awful. It was like a world that its Maker had built in a fit of joy, and then got tired of, and broke in pieces, and blew out all its fires, and left — ah yes — like that! And out in the distance I — I only saw a bear travelling eastward."

The governor said slowly:

"'And I took My staff Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break My covenant which I had made with all the people.'"

"Yes — like that." Pierre continued: "Babiche turned to me with a little laugh, which was a sob too. 'Where is it, Pierre?' said he. I knew he meant the bear. 'Gone to look for another man,' I said, with a gay look, for I saw that he was troubled. 'Come,' said he, at once. As we went, he saw my dogs. He stopped short and shook a little, and tears came into his eyes. 'What is it, Babiche?' said I. He looked back towards the south. 'My dogs — Brandy-wine, Come-along, 'Poleon, and the rest — died one night all of an hour. One by one they crawl over to where I lay in my fur bag, and die there, huddling by me — and such cries — such cries! There was poison or something in the frozen fish I'd given them. I loved them every one;

and then there was the mails, the year's mails—how should they be brought on? That was a bad thought, for I had never missed — never in ten years. There was one bunch of letters which the governor said to me was worth more than all the rest of the mail put together, and I was to bring it to Fort St. Saviour, or not show my face to him again.

"'I leave the dogs there in the snow, and came on with the sled, carrying all the mails. Ah, the blessed saints, how heavy the sled got, and how lonely it was! Nothing to speak to — no one, no thing, day after day. At last I go to cry to the dogs, "Come-along! 'Poleon! Brandy-wine!"— like that! I think I see them there, but they never bark and they never snarl, and they never spring to the snap of the whip. . . . I was alone. Oh, my head! my head! If there was only something alive to look at, besides the wide white plain, and the bare hills of ice, and the sun-dogs in the sky! Now I was wild, next hour I was like a child, then I gnashed my teeth like a wolf at the sun, and at last I got on my knees. The tears froze my eye-lids shut, but I kept saying, "Ah, my great Friend, my Jésu, just something, something with the breath of life! Leave me not all alone!" And I got sleepier all the time.

"'I was sinking, sinking, so quiet and easy, when all at once I felt something beside me; I could hear it breathing, but I could not open my eyes at first, for, as I say, the lashes were froze. Something touch me, smell me, and a nose was push against my chest. I put out my hand ver' soft and touch it. I had no fear; I was so glad I could have hugged it, but I did not — I drew back my hand quiet and rub my eyes. In a little I can see. There stand the thing — a polar bear — not ten feet away, its red eyes shining. On my knees I spoke to it, talk to it, as I would to a man. It was like a great wild dog, fierce, yet kind, and I fed it with the fish which had been for Brandy-wine and the rest — but not to kill it! and it did not die.

"'That night I lie down in my bag — no, I was not afraid! The bear lie beside me, between me and the sled. Ah, it was warm! Day after day we travel together, and camp together at night — ah, sweet Sainte Anne, how good it was, myself and the wild beast such friends, alone in the north! But to-day — a little while ago — something went wrong with me, and I got sick in the head, a swimming like a tide wash in and out. I fell down — asleep. When I wake I find you here beside me — that is all. The bear must have drag me here.'"

Pierre stuck a splinter into the fire to light another cigarette, and paused as if expecting the governor to speak, but no word coming, he continued: "I had my arm around him while we talked and come slowly down the hill. Soon he stopped and said, 'This is the place.' It was a cave of ice, and we went in. Nothing was there to see except the sled. Babiche stopped short. It come to him now that his good comrade was gone. He turned, and looked out, and called, but there was only the empty night, the ice, and the stars. Then he come back, sat down on the sled, and the tears fall. . . . I lit my spirit-lamp, boiled coffee, got pemmican from my bag, and I tried to make him eat. No, he would only drink the coffee. At last he said to me, 'What day is this, Pierre?' 'It is the day of the Great Birth, Babiche,' I said. He made the sign of the cross, and was quiet, so quiet! but he smile to himself, and kept saying in a whisper, 'Ma p'tite Corinne! Ma p'tite Corinne!' The next day we come on safe, and in a week I was back at Fort St. Saviour with Babiche and all the mails, and that most wonderful letter of the governor's."

"The letter was to tell a factor that his sick child in the hospital at Quebec was well," the

governor responded quietly: "Who was 'Ma p'tite Corinne,' Pierre?"

"His wife—in heaven; and his child—on the Chaudière, m'sieu'. The child came and the mother went on the same day of the Great Birth. He has a soft heart—that Babiche!"

"And the white bear—so strange a thing!"

"M'sieu', who can tell? The world is young up here. When it was all young, man and beast were good comrades, maybe."

"Ah, maybe. What shall be done with Little Babiche, Pierre?"

"He will never be the same again on the old trail, m'sieu'!"

There was silence for a long time, but at last the governor said, musing, almost tenderly, for he never had a child: "Ma p'tite Corinne!—Little Babiche shall live near his child, Pierre. I will see to that."

Pierre said no word, but got up, took off his hat to the governor, and sat down again.

At Point o' Bugles

"John York, John York, where art thou gone, John York?"

"What 's that, Pierre?" said Sir Duke Lawless, starting to his feet and peering round.

"Hush!" was Pierre's reply. "Wait for the rest. . . . There!"

"King of my heart, king of my heart, I am out on the trail of thy bugles."

Sir Duke was about to speak, but Pierre lifted a hand in warning, and then through the still night there came the long cry of a bugle, rising, falling, strangely clear, echoing and echoing again, and dying away. A moment, and the call was repeated, with the same effect, and again a third time; then all was still, save for the flight of birds roused from the desire of night, and the long breath of some animal in the woods sinking back to sleep.

Their camp was pitched on the south shore of Hudson's Bay, many leagues to the west of Rupert House, not far from the Moose River. Looking north was the wide expanse of bay,

dotted with sterile islands here and there; to the east were the barren steppes of Labrador, and all round them the calm, incisive air of a late September, when winter begins to shake out his frosty curtains and hang them on the cornice of the north, despite the high protests of the sun. The two adventurers had come together after years of separation, and Sir Duke had urged Pierre to fare away with him to Hudson's Bay, which he had never seen, although he had shares in the great Company, left him by his uncle the admiral.

They were camped in a hollow, to the right a clump of hardy trees, with no great deal of foliage but some stoutness; to the left a long finger of land running out into the water like a wedge, the most eastern point of the western shore of Hudson's Bay. It was high and bold, and, somehow, had a fine dignity and beauty. From it a path led away north to a great log-fort called King's House.

Lawless saw Pierre half rise and turn his head, listening, Presently he too heard the sound — the soft crash of crisp grass under the feet. He raised himself to a sitting posture and waited.

Presently a tall figure came out of the dusk into the light of their fire, and a long arm waved a greeting at them. Both Lawless and Pierre

rose to their feet. The stranger was dressed in buckskin, he carried a rifle, and around his shoulder was a strong yellow cord, from which hung a bugle.

"*How!*" he said, with a nod, and drew near the fire, stretching out his hands to the blaze.

"*How!*" said Lawless and Pierre.

After a moment Lawless drew from his blanket a flask of brandy, and without a word handed it over the fire. The fingers of the two men met in the flicker of the flames, a sort of bond by fire, and the stranger raised the flask.

"*Chin-chin!*" he said, and drank, breathing a long sigh of satisfaction afterwards as he handed it back; but it was Pierre that took it, and again fingers touched in the bond of fire. Pierre passed the flask to Lawless, who lifted it.

"*Chin-chin!*" he said, drank, and gave the flask to Pierre again, who did as did the others, and said "*Chin-chin!*" also.

By that salutation of the east, given in the far north, Lawless knew that he had met one who had lighted fires where men are many and close to the mile as holes in a sieve.

They all sat down, and tobacco went round, the stranger offering his, while the two others, with true hospitality, accepted.

"We heard you over there—it was you?"

said Lawless, nodding towards Point o' Bugles, and glancing at the bugle the other carried.

"Yes, it was me," was the reply. "Some one always does it twice a year: on the 25th September and the 25th March. I 've done it now without a break for ten years, until it has got to be a sort of religion with me, and the whole thing 's as real as if King George and John York were talking. As I tramp to the point or swing away back, in summer barefooted, and in winter on my snow-shoes, to myself I seem to be John York on the trail of the king's bugles. I 've thought so much about the whole thing, I 've read so many of John York's letters—and how many times one of the king's!—that now I scarcely know which is the bare story, and which the bits I 've dreamed as I 've tramped over the plains or sat in the quiet at King's House, spelling out little by little the man's life, from the cues I found in his journal, in the Company's papers, and in that one letter of the king's."

Pierre's eyes were now more keen than those of Lawless: for years he had known vaguely of this legend of Point o' Bugles.

"You know it all," he said. "Begin at the beginning: how and when you first heard, how you got the real story, and never mind which is taken from the papers and which from your own

mind—if it all fits in it is all true, for the lie never fits in right with the square truth. If you have the footprints and the handprints you can tell the whole man; if you have the horns of a deer you know it as if you had killed it, skinned it, and potted it."

The stranger stretched himself before the fire nodding at his hosts as he did so, and then began:

"Well, a word about myself, first," he said, "so you'll know just where you are. I was full up of life in London town and India, and that's a fact. I'd plenty of friends and little money, and my will was n't equal to the task of keeping out of the hands of the Jews. I did n't know what to do, but I had to go somewhere, that was clear. Where? An accident decided it. I came across an old journal of my great-grandfather, John York—my name's Dick Adderley—and just as if a chain had been put round my leg and I'd been jerked over by the tipping of the world, I had to come to Hudson's Bay. John York's journal was a thing to sit up nights to read. It came back to England after he'd had his fill of Hudson's Bay and the earth beneath, and had gone, as he himself said on the last page of the journal, to follow the king's buglers in 'the land that is far off.' God *and* the devil were strong

in old John York. I did n't lose much time after I'd read the journal. I went to Hudson's Bay House in London, got a place in the Company, by the help of the governor himself, and came out. I've learned the rest of the history of old John York—the part that never got to England; for here at King's House there's a holy tradition that the real John York belongs to it and to it alone."

Adderley laughed a little. "King's House guards John York's memory, and it's as fresh and real here now as though he'd died yesterday, though it's forgotten in England, and by most who bear his name, and the present Prince of Wales maybe never heard of the man who was a close friend of the prince regent, the first gentleman of Europe."

"That sounds sweet gossip," said Lawless with a smile; "we're waiting."

Adderley continued: "John York was an honest man, of wholesome sport, jovial, and never shirking with the wine, commendable in his appetite, of rollicking soul and proud temper, and a gay dog altogether—gay, but to be trusted, too, for he had a royal heart. In the coltish days of the prince regent he was a boon comrade, but never did he stoop to flattery, nor would he hedge when truth should be spoken, as

ofttimes it was needed with the royal blade, for at times he would forget that a prince was yet a man, topped with the accident of a crown. Never prince had truer friend, and so in his best hours he thought, himself, and if he ever was just and showed his better part it was to the bold country gentleman who never minced praise or blame, but said his say and devil take the end of it. In truth, the prince was wilful, and once he did a thing which might have given a twist to the fate of England. Hot for the love of women, and with some dash of real romance in him, too —else even as a prince he might have had shallower love and service—he called John York one day and said:

"'To-night at seven, Squire John, you'll stand with me while I put the seal on the Gates of Eden!' and, when the other did not guess his import, added: 'Sir Mark Selby is your neighbour—his daughter's for my arms to-night. You know her, handsome Sally Selby—she's for your prince, for good or ill.'

"John York did not understand at first, for he could not think the prince had anything in mind but some hot escapade of love. When Mistress Selby's name was mentioned his heart stood still, for she had been his choice, the dear apple of his eye, since she had bloomed towards woman-

hood. He had set all his hopes upon her, tarrying till she should have seen some little life before he asked her for his wife. He had her father's God-speed to his wooing, for he was a man whom all men knew honest and generous as the sun, and only choleric with the mean thing. She, also, had given him good cause to think that he should one day take her to his home, a loved and honoured wife. His impulse, when her name passed the prince's lips, was to draw his sword, for he would have called an emperor to account; but presently he saw the real meaning of the speech; that the prince would marry her that night."

Here the story-teller paused again, and Pierre said softly, inquiringly:

"You began to speak in your own way, and you've come to another way—like going from an almanac to the Mass."

The other smiled. "That's so. I've heard it told by old Shearton at King's House, who speaks as if he'd stepped out of Shakespeare, and somehow I seem to hear him talking, and I tell it as he told it last year to the governor of the Company. Besides, I've listened these seven years to his style."

"It's a strange beginning—unwritten history of England," said Sir Duke musingly.

"You shall hear stranger things yet," answered Adderley. "John York could hardly believe it at first, for the thought of such a thing never had place in his mind. Besides, the prince knew how he had looked upon the lady, and he could not have thought his comrade would come in between him and his happiness. Perhaps it was the difficulty, adding spice to the affair, that sent the prince to the appeal of private marriage to win the lady, and John York always held that he loved her truly then, the first and only real affection of his life. The lady—who can tell what won her over from the honest gentleman to the faithless prince? That soul of vanity which wraps about the real soul of every woman fell down at last before the highest office in the land, and the gifted bearer of the office. But the noble spirit in her brought him to offer marriage, when he might otherwise have offered, say, a barony. There is a record of that and more in John York's memoirs which I will tell you, for they have settled in my mind like an old song, and I learned them long ago. I give you John York's words, written by his own hand:

"'I did not think when I beheld thee last, dearest flower of the world's garden, that I should see thee bloom in that wide field, rank with the sorrows of royal favor. How did my foolish

eyes fill with tears when I watched thee, all rose and gold in thy cheeks and hair, the light falling on thee through the chapel window, putting thy pure palm into my prince's, swearing thy life away, selling the very blossoms of earth's orchards for the briar beauty of a hidden vineyard! I saw the flying glories of thy cheeks, the halcyon weather of thy smile, the delicate lifting of thy bosom, the dear gaiety of thy step, and, at that moment, I mourned for thy sake that thou wert not the dullest wench in the land, for then thou hadst been spared thy miseries; thou hadst been saved the torture-boot of a lost love and a disacknowledged wifedom. Yet I could not hide from me that thou wert happy at that great moment when he swore to love and cherish thee till death ye parted. Ah, George, my prince, my king, how wickedly thou didst break thy vows with both of us who loved thee well, through good and ill report — for they spake evil of thee, George; aye, the meanest of thy subjects spake lightly of their king — when with that sweet soul secretly hid away in the farthest corner of thy kingdom, thou soughtst divorce from thy later Caroline, whom thou, unfaithful, didst charge with infidelity. When, at last, thou didst turn again to the partner of thy youth, thy true wife in the eyes of God, it

was too late. Thou didst promise me that thou wouldst never take another wife, never put our dear heart away, though she could not—after our miserable laws—bear thee princes. Thou didst break thy promise, yet she forgave thee, and I forgave thee, for well we knew that thou wouldst pay a heavy reckoning, and that in the hour when thou shouldst cry to us we might not come to thee; that in the days when age and sorrow and vast troubles should oppress thee, thou wouldst long for the true hearts who loved thee for thyself and not for aught thou couldst give, or aught that thou wert, save as a man.

"'When thou didst proclaim thy purpose to take Caroline to wife, I pleaded with thee, I was wroth with thee. Thy one plea was succession. Succession! Succession! What were a hundred dynasties beside that precious life, eaten by shame and sorrow? It were easy for others, not thy children, to come after thee, to rule as well as thee, as must even now be the case, for thou hast no lawful child save that one in the loneliest corner of thy English vineyard—alack! alack! I warned thee, George; I pleaded, and thou didst drive me out with words ill-suited to thy friend who loved thee.

"'I did not fear thee; I would have forced thee to thy knees or made thee fight me, had

not some good spirit cried to my heart that thou wert her husband, and that we both had loved thee. I dared not listen to the brutal thing thou hintedst at—that now I might fatten where I had hungered. Thou hadst to answer for the baseness of that thought to the King of kings, when thou wentest forth alone; no subject, courtier, friend, wife or child to do thee service, journeying—not *en prince*, George; no, not *en prince!* but as a naked soul to God.

"'Thou saidst to me: "Get thee gone, John York, where I shall no more see thee." And when I returned, "Wouldst thou have me leave thy country, sir?" thou answeredst, "Blow thy quarrelsome soul to the stars where my farthest bugle cries!" Then I said: "I go, sir, till thou callest me again—and after: but not till thou hast honored the child of thy honest wedlock; till thou hast secured thy wife to the end of her life against all manner of trouble save the shame of thy disloyalty." There was no more for me to do, for my deep love itself forbade my staying longer within reach of the noble, deserted soul. And so I saw the chastened glory of her face no more, nor nevermore beheld her perfectness.'"

Adderley paused once more, and, after refilling his pipe in silence, continued:

"That was the heart of the thing. His soul sickened of the rank world, as he called it, and he came out to the Hudson's Bay country, leaving his estates in care of his nephew, but taking many stores and great chests of clothes and a shipload of furniture, instruments of music, more than a thousand books, some good pictures, and great stores of wine. Here he came and stayed, an officer of the Company, building King's House, and filling it with all the fine things he had brought with him, making in this far north a little palace in the wilderness. Here he lived, his great heart growing greater in this wide, sinewy world, King's House a place of pilgrimage for all the Company's men in the north; a noble gentleman in a sweet exile, loving what he could no more, what he did no more, see.

"Twice a year he went to that point yonder and blew this bugle, no man knew why or wherefore, year in and year out, till 1817. Then there came a letter to him with great seals, which began: 'John York, John York, where art thou gone, John York?' Then followed a score of sorrowful sentences, full of petulance, too, for it was as John York foretold, his prince longed for the true souls whom he had cast off. But he called too late, for the neglected wife died from the shock of her prince's longing message to

her, and when, by the same mail, John York knew that, he would not go back to England to the king. But twice every year he went to yonder point and spoke out the king's word to him: 'John York, John York, where art thou gone, John York?' and gave the words of his own letter in reply: 'King of my heart, king of my heart, I am out on the trail of thy bugles.' To this he added three calls of the bugle, as you have heard."

Adderley handed the bugle to Lawless, who looked at it with deep interest and passed it on to Pierre.

"When he died," Adderley continued, "he left the house, the fittings and the stores to the officers of the Company who should be stationed there, with a sum of money yearly, provided that twice in twelve months the bugle should be blown as you have heard it, and those words called out."

"Why did he do that?" asked Lawless, nodding towards the point.

"Why do they swing the censers at the Mass?" interjected Pierre. "Man has signs for memories, and one man seeing another's sign will remember his own."

"You stay because you like it—at King's House?" asked Lawless of Adderley.

The other stretched himself lazily to the fire and, "I am at home," he said. "I have no cares. I had all there was of that other world; I 've not had enough of this. You 'll come with me to King's House to-morrow?" he added.

To their quick assent he rejoined: "You 'll never want to leave. You 'll stay on."

To this Lawless replied, shaking his head: "I have a wife and child in England."

But Pierre did not reply. He lifted the bugle, mutely asking a question of Adderley, who as mutely replied, and then, with it in his hand, left the other two beside the fire.

A few minutes later they heard, with three calls of the bugle from the Point afterwards, Pierre's voice:

"John York, John York, where art thou gone, John York?"

Then came the reply:

"King of my heart, king of my heart, I am out on the trail of thy bugles."

The Spoil of the Puma

Just at the point where the Peace River first hugs the vast outpost hills of the Rockies, before it hurries timorously on, through an unexplored region, to Fort St. John, there stood a hut. It faced the west, and was built half-way up Clear Mountain. In winter it had snows above it and below it; in summer it had snow above it and a very fair stretch of trees and grass, while the river flowed on the same winter and summer. It was a lonely country. Traveling north, you would have come to the Turnagain River; west to the Frying Pan Mountains; south, to a goodly land. But from the hut you had no outlook towards the south; your eye came plump against a hard, lofty hill, like a wall between heaven and earth. It is strange, too, that, when you are in the far north, you do not look towards the south until the north turns an iron hand upon you and refuses the hospitality of food and fire; your eyes are drawn towards the Pole by that charm—deadly and beautiful—

for which men have given up three points of the compass, with their pleasures and ease, to seek a grave solitude, broken only by the beat of a musk-ox's hoofs, the long breath of the caribou, or the wild cry of the puma.

Sir Duke Lawless had felt this charm, and had sworn that one day he would again leave his home in Devon and his house in Pont Street and, finding Pierre, Shon M'Gann and others of his old comrades, together they would travel into those austere yet pleasant wilds. He kept his word, found Shon M'Gann, and on an autumn day of a year not so long ago lounged in this hut on Clear Mountain. They had had three months of travel and sport, and were filled, but not sated, with the joy of the hunter. They were very comfortable, for their host, Pourcette, the French Canadian, had fire and meat in plenty, and, if silent, was attentive to their comfort — a little, black-bearded, grey-headed man, with heavy brows over small, vigilant eyes, deft with his fingers and an excellent sportsman, as could be told from the skins heaped in all the corners of the large hut.

The skins were not those of mere foxes or martens or deer, but of mountain lions and grizzlies. There were besides many soft, tiger-like skins, which Sir Duke did not recognize.

He kept looking at them, and at last went over and examined one.

"What's this, Monsieur Pourcette?" he said, feeling it as it lay on the top of the pile.

The little man pushed the log on the fireplace with his moccasined foot before he replied: "Of a puma, m'sieu'."

Sir Duke smoothed it with his hand. "I didn't know there were pumas here."

"Faith, Sir Duke—"

Sir Duke Lawless turned on Shon quickly. "You're forgetting again, Shon. There's no 'Sir Dukes' between us. What you were to me years ago on the wallyby-track and the buffalo-trail you are now, and I'm the same also; M'Gann and Lawless and no other."

"Well, then, Lawless, it's true enough as he says it, for I've seen more than wan skin brought in, though I niver clapped eye on the beast alive. There's few men go huntin' them av their own free will, not more than they do grizzlies; but, bedad, this Frinch gintleman has either the luck o' the world, or the gift o' that man ye tould me of that slew the wild boars in anciency. Look at that, now: there's thirty or forty puma-skins, and I'd take my oath there is n't another man in the country that's shot half that in his lifetime."

Pourcette's eyes were on the skins, not on the men, and he did not appear to listen. He sat leaning forward, with a strange look on his face. Presently he got up, came over, and stroked the skins softly. A queer chuckling noise came from his throat.

"It was good sport?" asked Lawless, feeling a new interest in him.

"The grandest sport — but it is not so easy," answered the old man. "The grizzly comes on you bold and strong; you know your danger right away, and have it out. So! But the puma comes — God, how the puma comes!" He broke off, his eyes burning bright under his bushy brows and his body arranging itself into an attitude of expectation and alertness.

"You have travelled far. The sun goes down. You build a fire and cook your meat, and then good tea and the tabac. It is ver' fine. You hear the loon crying on the water, or the last whistle of the heron up the pass. The lights in the sky come out and shine through a thin mist — there is nothing like that mist, it is so fine and soft. *Allons!* You are sleepy. You bless the good God. You stretch pine branches, wrap in your blanket, and lie down to sleep. If it is winter and you have a friend, you lie close. It is all quiet. As you sleep, something comes. It

slides along the ground on its belly, like a snake. It is a pity if you have not ears that feel — the whole body as ears. For there is a swift lunge, a snarl — ah, you should hear it! the thing has you by the throat, and there is an end!"

The old man had acted all the scenes: a side-long glance, a little gesture, a movement of the body, a quick, harsh breath — without emphatic excitement, yet with a reality and force that fascinated his two listeners. When he paused, Shon let go a long breath, and Lawless looked with keen inquiry at their entertainer. This almost unnatural, yet quiet intensity had behind it something besides the mere spirit of the sportsman. Such exhibitions of feeling generally have an unusual personal interest to give them point and meaning.

"Yes, that's wonderful, Pourcette," he said; "but that's when the puma has things its own way. How is it when these come off?" He stroked the soft furs under his hand.

The man laughed, yet without a sound — the inward, stealthy laugh, as from a knowledge wicked in its very suggestiveness. His eyes ran from Lawless to Shon, and back again. He put his hand on his mouth, as though for silence, stole noiselessly over to the wall, took down his

gun quietly, and turned around. Then he spoke softly:

"To kill the puma, you must watch — always watch. You will see his yellow eyes sometimes in a tree; you must be ready before he springs. You will hear his breath at night as you pretend to sleep, and you wait till you see his foot steal out of the shadow — then you have him. From a mountain wall you watch in the morning, and, when you see him, you follow, and follow, and do not rest till you have found him. You must never miss fire, for he has great strength and a mad tooth. But when you have got him, he is worth all. You cannot eat the grizzly — he is too thick and coarse; but the puma — well, you had him for the pot to-night. Was he not good?"

Lawless's brows ran up in surprise. Shon spoke quickly:

"Heaven above!" he burst out. "Was it puma we had betune the teeth? And what 's puma but an almighty cat? Sure, though, it wint as tender as pullets, for all that, but I wish you had n't tould us."

The old man stood leaning on his gun, his chin on his hands as they covered the muzzle, his eyes fixed on something in his memory, the vision of incidents he had lived or seen.

Lawless went over to the fire and relit his pipe. Shon followed him. They both watched Pourcette.

"D' ye think he 's mad?" asked Shon in a whisper.

Lawless shook his head. "Mad? No! But there 's more in his puma-hunting than appears. How long has he lived here, did he say?"

"Four years, and durin' that time yours and mine are the only white faces he has seen, except one."

"Except one. Well, whose was the one? Maybe there's a story in that."

"Faith, Lawless, there's a story worth the hearin', I 'm thinkin', to every white man in this country. For the three years I was in the mounted police I could count a story for all the days o' the calendar, and not all o' them would make you happy to hear."

Pourcette turned round to them. He seemed to be listening to Shon's words. Going to the wall he hung up the rifle, then he came to the fire and stood holding out his hands to the blaze. He did not look in the least mad, but like a man who was dominated by some one thought, more or less weird. Short and slight, and a little bent, but more from habit—the habit of listening and watching—than from age, his face had

a stern kind of earnestness and loneliness, and nothing at all of insanity.

Presently Lawless went to a corner, and from his kit drew forth a flask. The old man saw, and immediately brought out a wooden cup. There were two on the shelf, and Shon pointed to the other. Pourcette took no notice. Shon went over to get it, but Pourcette laid a hand on his arm: "Not that!" he said.

"For ornamint!" said Shon, laughing, and then his eyes were arrested by a suit of buckskin and a cap of beaver, hanging on the wall. He turned them over, and then suddenly drew back his hand, for he saw in the back of the jacket a knife-slit. There was blood also on the buckskin.

"Holy Mary!" he said, and retreated. Lawless had not noticed; he was pouring out the liquor. He had handed the cup first to Pourcette, who raised it towards a gun hung above the fireplace, and said something under his breath.

"A dramatic little fellow!" thought Lawless; "The spirit of his forefathers — a good deal of heart, a little of the *poseur*."

Then hearing Shon's exclamation, he turned.

"It's an ugly sight," said Shon, pointing to the jacket. They both looked at Pourcette, ex-

pecting him to speak. The old man reached to the coat, and, turning it so that the cut and the blood were hid, ran his hand down it caressingly.

"Ah, poor Jo! poor Jo Gordineer!" he said; then he came over once more to the fire, sat down, and held out his hands to the fire, shaking his head.

"For God's sake, Lawless, give me a drink!" said Shon. Their eyes met, and there was the same look in the faces of both. When Shon had drunk, he said: "So, that's what 's come to our old friend, Jo — dead — killed or murdered —"

"Do n't speak so loud!" said Lawless. "Let us get the story from him first."

Years before, when Shon M'Gann and Pierre and Lawless had sojourned in the Pipi Valley, Jo Gordineer had been with them, as stupid and true a man as ever drew in his buckle in a hungry land, or let it out to much corn and oil. When Lawless returned to find Shon and others of his companions, he had asked for Gordineer. But not Shon nor any one else could tell aught of him; he had wandered north to outlying goldfields, and then had disappeared completely. But there, as it would seem, his coat and cap hung, and his rifle, dust covered, kept guard over the fire.

Shon went over to the coat, did as Pourcette

had done, and said : "Is it gone y' are, Jo, wid your slow tongue and your big heart ? Wan by wan the lads are off."

Pourcette, without any warning, began speaking, but in a very quiet tone at first, as if unconscious of the others :

"Poor Jo Gordineer ! Yes, he is gone. He was my friend—so tall, and such a hunter. We were at the Ding-Dong goldfields together. When luck went bad, I said to him : 'Come, we will go where there is plenty of wild meat, and a summer more beautiful than in the south.' I did not want to part from him, for once, when some miner stole my claim, and I fought, he stood by me. But in some things he was a little child. That was from his big heart. Well, he would go, he said ; and we come away."

He suddenly became silent ; and shook his head, and spoke under his breath.

"Yes," said Lawless quietly, "you went away. What then ?"

He looked up quickly, as though just aware of their presence, and continued :

"Well, the other followed, as I said, and—"

"No, Pourcette," interposed Lawless, "you *did n't* say. Who was the other that followed ?"

The old man looked at him gravely, and a little severely, and continued :

"As I said, Gawdor followed—he and an Indian. Gawdor thought we were going for gold, because I had said I knew a place in the north where there was gold in a river—I know the place, but that is no matter. We did not go for gold just then. Gawdor hated Jo Gordineer. There was a half-breed girl. She was fine to look at. She would have gone to Gordineer if he had beckoned, any time; but he waited—he was very slow, except with his finger on a gun; he waited too long. Gawdor was mad for the girl. He knew why her feet came slow to the door when he knocked. He would have quarrelled with Jo, if he had dared; Gordineer was too quick a shot. He would have killed him from behind; but it was known in the camp that he was no friend of Gordineer, and it was not safe."

Again Pourcette was silent. Lawless put on his knee a new pipe filled with tobacco. The little man took it, lighted it, and smoked on in silence for a time undisturbed. Shon broke the silence, by a whisper to Lawless:

"Jo was a quiet man, as patient as a priest; but when his blood came up, there was trouble in the land. Do you remimber whin—"

Lawless interrupted him and motioned towards Pourcette. The old man, after a few puffs, held

the pipe on his knee, disregarding it. Lawless silently offered him some more whisky, but he shook his head. Presently he again took up the thread:

"*Bien*, we travelled slow up through the Smoky River country, and beyond into a wild land. We had bully sport as we went. Sometimes I heard shots far away behind us; but Gordineer said it was my guess, for we saw nobody. But I had a feeling. Never mind. At last we come to the Peace River. It was in the early autumn like this, when the land is full of comfort. What is there like it? Nothing. The mountains have colours like a girl's eyes; the smell of the trees is sweet like a child's breath, and the grass feels for the foot and lifts it with a little soft spring. We said we could live here forever. We built this house high up, as you see, first, because it is good to live high —it puts life in the blood; and, as Gordineer said, it is noble to look far over the world, every time your house door is open, or the parchment is down from the window. We killed wapiti and caribou without number, and *cached* them for our food. We caught fish in the river, and made tea out of the brown berry—it is very good. We had flour, a little, which we had brought with us, and I went to Fort St. John and got more. Since

then, down in the valley, I have wheat every summer; for the Chinook winds blow across the mountains and soften the bitter cold.

"Well, for that journey to Fort St. John. When I got back I found Gawdor with Gordineer. He said he had come north to hunt. His Indian had left, and he have lost his way. Gordineer believed him. He never lied himself. I said nothing, but watched. After a time he asked where the goldfield was. I told him, and he started away—it was about fifty miles to the north. He went, and on his way back he come here. He say he could not find the place, and was going south. I knew he lied. At this time I saw that Gordineer was changed. He was slow in the head, and so, when he begun thinking up here, it made him lonely. It is always in a fine land like this, where game is plenty, and the heart dances for joy in your throat, and you sit by the fire—that you think of some woman who would be glad to draw in and tie the strings of the tent curtain, or fasten the latch of the door upon you two alone."

Perhaps some memory stirred within the old man other than that of his dead comrade, for he sighed, muffled his mouth in his beard, and then smiled in a distant way at the fire. The pure truth of what he said came home to Shon

M'Gann and Sir Duke Lawless; for both, in days gone by, had sat at campfires in silent plains and thought upon women from whom they believed they were parted forever, yet who were only kept from them for a time, to give them happier days. They were thinking of these two women now. They scarcely knew how long they sat there thinking. Time passes swiftly when thoughts are cheerful, or are tinged with the soft melancholy of a brief separation.

At last the old man continued: "I saw the thing grew on him. He was not sulky, but he stare much in the fire at night. In the daytime he was differen'. A hunter thinks only of his sport. Gawdor watched him. Gordineer's hand was steady; his nerve was all right. I I have seen him stand still till a grizzly come within twice the length of his gun. Then he would twist his mouth, and fire into the mortal spot. Once we were out in the Wide Wing pass. We had never had such a day. Gordineer make grand shots, better than my own; and men have said I can shoot like the devil—ha! ha!" He chuckled to himself noiselessly, and said in a whisper: "Twenty grizzlies, and fifty pumas!"

Then he rubbed his hands softly on his knees, and spoke aloud again: "*Ici*, I was proud

of him. We were standing together on a ledge of rock. Gawdor was not far away. Gawdor was a poor hunter, and I knew he was wild at Gordineer's great luck. . . . A splendid bull-wapiti come out on a rock across the gully. It was a long shot. I did not think Gordineer could make it; I was not sure that I could—the wind was blowing and the range was long. But he draw up his gun like lightning, and fire all at once. The bull dropped clean over the cliff, and tumbled dead upon the rocks below. It was fine. But, then, Gordineer slung his gun under his arm and say: 'That is enough. I am going to the hut.'

"He went away. That night he did not talk. The next morning, when I say, 'We will be off again to the pass,' he shake his head. He would not go. He would shoot no more, he said. I understood: it was the girl. He was wide awake at last. Gawdor understanded also. He know that Gordineer would go to the south—to her. I was sorry; but it was no use. Gawdor went with me to the pass. When we come back, Jo was gone. On a bit of birch-bark he had put where he was going, and the way he would take. He said he would come back to me—ah, the brave comrade! Gawdor say nothing, but his looks were black. I had a feeling. I sat up all

night smoking. I was not afraid, but I know Gawdor had found the valley of gold, and he might put a knife in me, because to know of such a thing alone is fine. Just at dawn he got up and go out. He did not come back. I waited, and at last went to the pass. In the afternoon, just as I was rounding the corner of a cliff, there was a shot—then another. The first went by my head; the second caught me along the ribs, but not to great hurt. Still, I fell from the shock, and lost some blood. It was Gawdor; he thought he had killed me.

"When I come to myself I bound up the little furrow in the flesh and start away. I know that Gawdor would follow Gordineer. I follow him, knowing the way he must take. I have never forget the next night. I had to travel hard, and I track him by his fires and other things. When sunset come, I do not stop. I was in a valley and I push on. There was a little moon. At last I saw a light ahead—a campfire, I know. I was weak, and could have dropped; but a dread was on me. I come to the fire. I saw a man lying near it. Just as I saw him he was trying to rise. But, as he did so, something sprang out of the shadow upon him, at his throat. I saw him raise his hand and strike it with a knife. The thing let go, and

then I fire—but only scratched, I think. It was a puma. It sprang away again, into the darkness. I ran to the man and raised him. It was my friend. He looked up at me and shake his head. He was torn at the throat. But there was something else—a wound in the back. He was stooping over the fire when he was stabbed, and he fell. He saw that it was Gawdor. He had been left for dead, as I was. Dear Lord, just when I come and could have save him, the puma come also. It is the best men who have such luck. I have seen it often. I used to wonder they did not curse God."

He crossed himself and mumbled something. Lawless rose, and walked up and down the room once or twice, pulling at his beard and frowning. His eyes were wet. Shon kept blowing into his closed hands and blinking at the fire. Pourcette got up and took down the gun from the chimney. He brushed off the dust with his coat-sleeve, and fondled it, shaking his head at it a little. As he began to speak again, Lawless sat down.

"Now I know why they do not curse. Something curses for them. Jo gave me a word for her, and say: 'Well, it is all right; but I wish I had killed the puma.' There was noth-

ing more. . . . I followed Gawdor for days. I know that he would go and get some one, and go back to the gold. I thought at last I had missed him; but no. I had made up my mind what to do when I found him. One night, just as the moon was showing over the hills, I come upon him. I was quiet as a puma. I have a stout cord in my pocket, and another about my body. Just as he was stooping over the fire, as Gordineer did, I sprang upon him, clasping him about the neck, and bringing him to the ground. He could not get me off. I am small, but I have a grip. Then, too, I had one hand at his throat. It was no use to struggle. The cord and a knife were in my teeth. It was a great trick, but his breath was well gone, and I fastened his hands. It was no use to struggle. I tied his feet and legs. Then I carried him to a tree and bound him tight. I unfastened his hands again and tied them round the tree. Then I built a great fire not far away. He begged at first and cried. But I was hard. He got wild, and at last when I leave him he cursed! It was like nothing I ever heard. He was a devil. . . . I come back after I have carry the message to the poor girl—it is a sad thing

to see the first great grief of the young! Gawdor was not there. The pumas and others had been with him.

"There was more to do. I wanted to kill that puma which set its teeth in the throat of my friend. I hunted the woods where it had happened, beating everywhere, thinking that, perhaps, it was dead. There was not much blood on the leaves, so I guessed that it had not died. I hunted from that spot, and killed many—many. I saw that they began to move north. At last I got back here. From here I have hunted and killed them slow; but never that one with a wound in the shoulder from Jo's knife. Still, I can wait. There is nothing like patience for the hunter and for the man who would have blood for blood."

He paused, and Lawless spoke: "And when you have killed that puma, Pourcette, if you ever do, what then?"

Pourcette fondled the gun, then rose and hung it up again before he replied.

"Then I will go to Fort St. John, to the girl—she is there with her father—and sell all the skins to the factor and give her the money." He waved his hand round the room. "There are many skins here, but I have more *cached* not far away. Once a year I go to the Fort for flour

and bullets. A dog team and a *bois-brûlé* bring them, and then I am alone as before. When all that is done I will come back."

"And then, Pourcette?" said Shon.

"Then I will hang that one skin over the chimney where his gun is, and go out and kill more pumas. What else can I do? When I stop killing I shall be killed. A million pumas and their skins are not worth the life of my friend."

Lawless looked round the room, at the wooden cup, the gun, the bloodstained clothes on the wall and the skins. He got up, came over and touched Pourcette on the shoulder.

"Little man," he said, "give it up and come with me. Come to Fort St. John, sell the skins, give the money to the girl, and then let us travel to the Barren Grounds together, and from there to the south country again. You will go mad up here. You have killed enough—Gawdor and many pumas. If Jo could speak, he would say, Give it up! I knew Jo. He was my good friend before he was yours—mine and McGann's here—and we searched for him to travel with us. He would have done so, I think, for we had sport and trouble of one kind and another together. And he would have asked you to come also. Well, do so, little man. We have n't told

you our names. I am Sir Duke Lawless, and this is Shon M'Gann."

Pourcette nodded. "I do not know how it come to me, but I was sure from the first you are friends. He speak often of you and of two others—where are they?"

Lawless replied, and, at the name of Pretty Pierre, Shon hid his forehead in his hand in a troubled way.

"And you will come with us," said Lawless, "away from this loneliness?"

"It is not lonely," was the reply. "To hear the thrum of the pigeon, the whistle of the hawk, the chatter of the black squirrel, and the long cry of the eagles is not lonely. Then there is the river and the pines—all music; and for what the eye sees, God has been good; and to kill pumas is my joy. . . . So, I cannot go. These hills are mine. Few strangers come, and none stop but me. Still, tomorrow or any day, I will show you the way to the valley where the gold is. Perhaps riches is there, perhaps not, you shall find."

Lawless saw that it was no use to press the matter. The old man had but one idea, and nothing could ever change it. 'Solitude fixes our hearts immovably on things—call it madness, what you will. In busy life we have no

real or lasting dreams, no ideals. We have to go to the primeval hills and the wild plains for them. When we leave the hills and the plains we lose them again. Shon was, however, for the valley of gold. He was a poor man, and it would be a joyful thing for him if one day he could empty ample gold into his wife's lap. Lawless was not greedy, but he and good money were not at variance.

"See," said Shon, "the valley 's the thing. We can hunt as we go, and if there 's gold for the scrapin', why there y' are—fill up and come again. If not, divil the harm done. So here 's thumbs up to go, say I. But I wish, Lawless, I wish that I 'd niver known how Jo wint off, an' I wish we were all t'gither agin, as down in the Pipi Valley."

"There 's nothing stands in this world, Shon, but the faith of comrades and the truth of good women. The rest hangs by a hair. I 'll go to the valley with you. It 's many a day since I washed my luck in a gold-pan."

"I will take you there," said Pourcette, suddenly rising and, with shy abrupt motions, grasping their hands and immediately letting them go again. "I will take you tomorrow." Then he spread skins upon the floor, put wood upon the fire, and the three were soon asleep.

The next morning, just as the sun came laboriously over the white peak of a mountain and looked down into the great gulch beneath the hut, the three started. For many hours they crept along the side of the mountain, then came slowly down upon pine-crested hills, and over to where a small plain stretched out. It was Pourcette's little farm. Its position was such that it caught the sun always, and was protected from the north and east winds. Tall shafts of Indian corn with the yellow tassels were still standing, and the stubble of the field where the sickle had been showed in the distance like a carpet of gold. It seemed strange to Lawless that this old man beside him should be thus peaceful in his habits, the most primitive and arcadian of farmers, and yet one whose trade was blood—whose one purpose in life was destruction and vengeance.

They pushed on. Towards the end of the day they came upon a little herd of caribou, and had excellent sport. Lawless noticed that Pourcette seemed scarcely to take any aim at all, so swift and decisive was his handling of the gun. They skinned the deer and *cached* them, and took up the journey again. For four days they travelled and hunted alternately. Pourcette had shot two mountain lions, but they had seen no pumas.

On the morning of the fifth day they came upon the valley where the gold was. There was no doubt about it. A beautiful little stream ran through it, and its bed was sprinkled with gold—a goodly sight to a poor man like Shon, interesting enough to Lawless. For days, while Lawless and Pourcette hunted, Shon labored like a galley-slave, making the little specks into piles, and now and again crowning a pile with a nugget. The fever of the hunter had passed from him and another fever was on him. The others urged him to come away. The winter would soon be hard on them; he must go, and he and Lawless would return in the spring.

Prevailing on him at last, they started back to Clear Mountain. The first day Shon was abstracted. He carried the gold he had gathered in a bag wound about his body. It was heavy, and he could not travel fast. One morning, Pourcette, who had been off in the hills, came to say that he had sighted a little herd of wapiti. Shon had fallen and sprained his arm the evening before (gold is heavy to carry), and he did not go with the others. He stayed and dreamed of his good fortune, and of his home. In the late afternoon he lay down in the sun beside the campfire, and fell asleep from much thinking. Lawless and Pourcette had little suc-

cess. The herd had gone before they arrived. They beat the hills, and turned back to camp at last, without fret, like good sportsmen. At a point they separated, to come down upon the camp at different angles, in the hope of still getting a shot. The camp lay exposed upon a platform of the mountain.

Lawless came out upon a ledge of rock opposite the camp, a gulch lying between. He looked across. He was in the shadow, the other wall of the gulch was in the sun. The air was incomparably clear and fresh, with an autumnal freshness. Everything stood out distinct and sharply outlined, nothing flat or blurred. He saw the camp, and the fire, with the smoke quivering up in a diffusing blue column, Shon lying beside it. He leaned upon his rifle musingly. The shadows of the pines were blue and cold, but the tops of them were burnished with the cordial sun, and a glacier-field, somehow, took on a rose and violet light reflected, maybe, from the soft-complexioned sky. He drew in a long breath of delight, and widened his line of vision.

Suddenly, something he saw made him lurch backward. At an angle in almost equal distance from him and Shon, upon a small peninsula of rock, a strange thing was happening. Old

Pourcette was kneeling, engaged with his moccasin. Behind him was the sun, against which he was abruptly defined, and looked larger than usual. Clear space and air soft with color were about him. Across this space, on a little sloping plateau near him, there crept an animal. It seemed to Lawless that he could see the lithe stealthiness of its muscles and the ripple of its skin. But that was imagination, because he was too far away. He cried out and swung his gun shoulderwards in desperation. But, at the moment, Pourcette turned sharply round, saw his danger, caught his gun, and fired as the puma sprang. There had been no chance for aim, and the beast was only wounded. It dropped upon the man. He let the gun fall; it rolled and fell over the cliff. Then came a scene, wicked in its peril to Pourcette, for whom no aid could come, though two men stood watching the great fight—Shon M'Gann, awake now, and Lawless—with their guns silent in their hands. They dare not fire for fear of injuring the man, and they could not reach him in time to be of help.

There against the weird, solitary sky the man and the puma fought. When the animal dropped on him, Pourcette caught it by the throat with both hands and held back its fangs; but its

claws were furrowing the flesh of his breast and legs. His long arms were of immense strength, and though the pain of his torn flesh was great, he struggled grandly with the beast, and bore it away from his body. As he did so he slightly changed the position of one hand. It came upon a welt—a scar. When he felt that, new courage and strength seemed given him. He gave a low growl like an animal, and then, letting go one hand, caught at the knife in his belt. As he did so the puma sprang away from him, and crouched upon the rock, making ready for another leap. Lawless and Shon could see its tail curving and beating. But now, to their astonishment, the man was the aggressor. He was filled with a fury which knows nothing of fear. The welt his fingers had felt burned them.

He came slowly upon the puma. Lawless could see the hard glitter of his knife. The puma's teeth sawed together, its claws picked at the rocks, its body curved for a spring. The man sprang first, and ran the knife in; but not into a mortal corner. Once more they locked. The man's fingers were again at the puma's throat, and they swayed together, the claws of the beast making surface havoc. But now as they stood up, to the eyes of the fearful watchers inextricably mixed, the man lunged again with

his knife, and this time straight into the heart of the murderer. The puma loosened, quivered, fell back dead. The man rose to his feet with a cry, and his hands stretched above his head, as it were in a kind of ecstasy. Shon forgot his gold and ran; Lawless hurried also.

When the two men got to the spot they found Pourcette binding up his wounds. He came to his feet, heedless of his hurts, and grasped their hands. "Come, come, my friends, and see!" he cried.

He pulled forward the loose skin on the puma's breast and showed them the scar of a knife-wound above the one his own knife had made.

"I've got the other murderer," he said; "Gordineer's knife went in here. God, but it is good!"

Pourcette's flesh needed little medicine; he did not feel his pain and stiffness. When they reached Clear Mountain, bringing with them the skin which was to hang above the fireplace, Pourcette prepared to go to Fort St. John, as he had said he would, to sell all the skins and give the proceeds to the girl.

"When that's done," said Lawless, "you will have no reason for staying here. If you will come with us after, we will go to the Fort with

you. We three will then come back in the spring to the valley of gold for sport and riches."

He spoke lightly, yet seriously too. The old man shook his head. "I have thought," he said. "I cannot go to the south. I am a hunter now, nothing more. I have been long alone; I do not wish for change. I shall stay at Clear Mountain when these skins have go to Fort St. John, and if you come to me in the spring or at any time, my door will open to you, and I will share all with you. Gordineer was a good man. You are good men. I'll remember you, but I can't go with you. No! Some day you would leave me to go to the women who wait for you, and then I should be alone again. I will not change—*vraiment!*"

On the morning they left he took Jo Gordineer's cup from the shelf, and from a hidden place brought out a flask half-filled with liquor. He poured out a little in the cup gravely, and handed it to Lawless, but Lawless gave it back to him.

"You must drink from it," he said, "not me."

He held out the cup of his own flask. When each of the three had a share, the old man raised his long arm solemnly, and said in a tone so gentle that the others hardly recognized his

voice: "To a lost comrade!" They drank in silence.

"A little gentleman!" said Lawless, under his breath.

When they were ready to start, Lawless said to him at the last: "What will you do here, comrade, as the days go on?"

"There are pumas in the mountains!" he replied.

They parted from him upon the ledge where the great fight had occurred, and travelled into the east. Turning many times, they saw him still standing there. At a point where they must lose sight of him, they looked for the last time. He was alone with his solitary hills, leaning on his rifle. They fired two shots into the air. They saw him raise his rifle, and two faint reports came in reply. He became again immovable, as much a part of those hills as the shining glacier; never to leave them.

In silence the two rounded the cliff, and saw him no more.

The Trail of the Sun Dogs

"Well, you see," said Jacques Parfaite, as he gave Whiskey Wine, the leading dog, a cut with the whip and twisted his patois to the uses of narrative, "he has been alone there at the old Fort for a long time. I remember when I first saw him. It was in the summer. The world smell sweet if you looked this way or that. If you drew in your breath quick from the top of a hill you felt a great man. Ridley, the chief trader, and myself had come to the Fort on our way to the Mackenzie River. In the yard of the Fort the grass had grow tall, and sprung in the cracks under the doors and windows; the Fort had not been use for a long time. Once there was plenty of buffalo near, and the caribou sometimes; but they were all gone — only a few. The Indians never went that way, only when the seasons were the best. The Company had closed the Post; it did not pay. Still, it was pleasant after a long tramp to come to a fort, even empty. We know dam' well there is food buried in the yard or under the floor, and it would be droll

to open the place for a day — Lost Man's Tavern, we call it. Well —"

"Well, what?" said Sir Duke Lawless, who had travelled up to the Barren Grounds for the sake of adventure and game; and, with his old friend, Shon M'Gann, had trusted himself to the excellent care of Jacques Parfaite, the half-breed.

Jacques cocked his head on one side and shook it wisely and mysteriously. "*Très bien*, we trailed through the long grass, pried open the shutters and door, and went in. It is cool in the north of an evening, as you know. We build a fire, and soon there is very fine times. Ridley pried up the floor, and we found good things. Holy! but it was a feast. We had a little rum also. As we talk and a great laugh swim round, there come a noise behind us like shuffling feet. We got to our legs quick. *Mon Dieu*, a strange sight! A man stand looking at us with something in his face that make my fingers cold all at once—a look—well, you would think it was carved in stone—it never changed. Once I was at Fort Garry; the Church of Ste. Mary is there. They have a picture in it of the great scoundrel Judas as he went to hang himself. Judas was a fool—what was thirty dollars!—you give me hunder' to take you to the Barren Grounds. Pah!'

The half-breed chuckled, shook his head sagely, swore half-way through his vocabulary at Whiskey Wine, gratefully received a pipe of tobacco from Shon M'Gann, and continued: "He come in 'on us slow and still, and push out his long thin hands, the fingers bent like claws, towards the pot. He was starving. Yes, it was so; but I nearly laughed. It was spring—a man is a fool to starve in the spring. But he was differen'. There was a cause. The factor give him soup from the pot and a little rum. He was mad for meat, but that would have killed him. He did not look at you like a man. When you are starving you are an animal. But there was something more with this. He made the flesh creep, he was so thin, and strange, and sulky—eh, is that a word when the face looks dark and never smiles? So! He would not talk. When we ask him where he come from he points to the north; when we ask him where he is going, he shake his head as he not know. A man is mad not to know where he travel to up here; something comes quick to him unless, and it is not good to die too soon. The trader said, 'Come with us.' He shake his head, No. 'P'r'aps you want to stay here,' say Ridley loud, showing his teeth all in a minute. He nod. Then the trader laugh thick in his throat and give him

more soup. After, he try to make the man talk, but he was stubborn like that dirty Whiskey Wine—ah, *sacré bleu!*"

Whiskey Wine had his usual portion of whip and anathema before Jacques again took up the thread. "It was no use. He would not talk. When the trader got angry once more, he turned to me, and the look in his face make me sorry. I swore—Ridley did not mind that, I was thick friends with him. I say, 'Keep still. It is no good. He has had bad times. He has been lost, and seen mad things. He will never be again like when God make him.' Very well, I spoke true. He was like a sun dog."

"What 's that ye say, Parfaite ?" said Shon—"a sun dog ?"

Sir Duke Lawless, puzzled, listened eagerly for the reply.

The half-breed in delight ran before them, cracking his whip and jingling the bells at his knees. "Ah, that's it. It is a name we have for some. You do not know ? It is easy. In the high-up country"—pointing north—"you see sometimes many suns. But it is not many after all ; it is only one ; and the rest are the same as your face in looking-glasses—one, two, three, plenty. You see ?"

"Yes," said Sir Duke, "reflections of the real sun."

Parfaite tapped him on the arm. "So: you have the thing. Well, this man is not himself—he have left himself where he seen his bad times. It makes your flesh creep sometimes when you see the sun dogs in the sky—this man did the same. You shall see him tonight!"

Sir Duke looked at the little half-breed, and wondered that the product of so crude a civilization should be so little crude in his imagination. "What happened?" he asked.

"Nothing happened. But the man could not sleep. He sit before the fire, his eyes moving here and there, and sometimes he shiver. Well, I watch him. In the morning we leave him there, and he has been there ever since—the only man at the Fort. The Indians do not go; they fear him; but there is no harm in him. He is old now. In an hour we'll be there."

The sun was hanging with one shoulder up like a great, red, peering dwarf, on the far side of a long hillock of stunted pines, when the three arrived at the Fort. The yard was still as Parfaite had described it—full of rank grass, through which one path trailed to the open door. On the stockade walls grass grew, as though where men will not live like men Nature labors

to smother. The shutters of the window were not open; light only entered through narrow openings in them, made for the needs of possible attacks by Indians in the far past. One would have sworn that any one dwelling there was more like the dead than living. Yet it had, too, something of the peace of the lonely graveyard. There was no one in the Fort; but there were signs of life —skins piled here and there, a few utensils, a bench; a hammock for food swung from the rafters, a low fire burning in the chimney, and a rude spear stretched on the wall.

"Sure, the place gives you shivers!" said Shon. "Open go these windows. Put wood on the fire, Parfaite; cook the meat that we 've brought, and no other, me boy; and whin we 're filled wid a meal and the love o' God, bring in your Lost Man, or Sun Dog, or whativer 's he by name or nature."

While Parfaite and Shon busied themselves, Lawless wandered out with his gun, and, drawn on by the clear joyous air of the evening, walked along a path made by the same feet that had travelled the yard of the Fort. He followed it almost unconsciously at first, thinking of the strange histories that the far north hoards in its fastnesses, wondering what singular fate had driven the host of this secluded tavern —farthest

from the pleasant south country, nearest to the Pole—to stand, as it were, a sentinel at the raw outposts of the world. He looked down at the trail where he was walking with a kind of awe, which even his cheerful common sense could not dismiss.

He came to the top of a ridge on which were a handful of meagre trees. Leaning on his gun, he looked straight away into the farthest distance. On the left was a blurred edge of pines, with tops like ungainly tendrils feeling for the sky. On the right was a long, bare stretch of hills veiled in the thin smoke of the evening, and between, straight before him, was a wide lane of country, billowing away to where it froze into the vast archipelago that closes with the summit of the world. He experienced now that weird charm which has drawn so many into Arctic wilds and gathered the eyes of millions longingly. Wife, child, London, civilization, were forgotten for the moment. He was under a spell which, once felt, lingers in your veins always.

At length his look drew away from the glimmering distance, and he suddenly became conscious of human presence. Here at his feet almost was a man, also looking out along that slumbering waste. He was dressed in skins, his arms were folded across his breast, his chin bent

low, and he gazed up and out from deep eyes shadowed by strong brows. Lawless saw the shoulders of the watcher heave and shake once or twice, and then a voice with a deep aching trouble in it spoke; but at first he could catch no words. Presently, however, he heard distinctly, for the man raised his hands high above his head, and the words fell painfully: "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Then a low harsh laugh came from him, and he was silent again. Lawless did not move. At last the man turned round, and, seeing him standing motionless, his gun in his hands, he gave a hoarse cry. Then he stood still. "If you have come to kill, do not wait," he said. "I am ready."

At the sound of Lawless's reassuring voice he recovered, and began, in stumbling words, to excuse himself. His face was as Jacques Parfaite had described it; trouble of some terrible kind was furrowed in it, and, though his body was stalwart, he looked as if he had lived a century. His eyes dwelt on Sir Duke Lawless for a moment, and then, coming nearer, he said, "You are an Englishman?"

Lawless held out his hand in greeting, yet he was not sorry when the other replied: "The hand of no man in greeting. Are you alone?"

When he had been told, he turned toward the Fort, and silently they made their way to it. At the door he turned and said to Lawless, "My name—to you—is Detmold."

The greeting between Jacques and his sombre host was notable for its extreme brevity; with Shon M'Gann for its hesitation—Shon's impressionable Irish nature was awed by the look of the man, though he had seen some strange things in the north. Darkness was on them by this time; and the host lighted bowls of fat with wicks of deer's tendons, and by the light of these and the fire they ate their supper. Parfaite beguiled the evening with tales of the north, always interesting to Lawless, to which Shon added many a shrewd word of humor—for he had recovered quickly from his first timidity in the presence of the stranger.

As time went on Jacques saw that their host's eyes were frequently fixed on Sir Duke in a half-eager, musing way, and he got Shon away to bed and left the two together.

"You are a singular man. Why do you live here?" said Lawless. Then he went straight to the heart of the thing. "What trouble have you had, or of what crime are you guilty?"

The man rose to his feet, shaking, and

walked to and fro in the room for a time, more than once trying to speak, but failing. He beckoned to Lawless, and opened the door. Lawless took his hat and followed him along the trail they had travelled before supper until they had come to the ridge where they had met. The man faced the north, the moon glistening coldly on his gray hair. He spoke with incredible weight and slowness:

"I tell you, for you are one who understands men, and you come from a life that I once knew well. I know of your people. I was of good family—"

"I know the name," said Sir Duke, quietly, at the same time fumbling in his memory for flying bits of gossip and history which he could not instantly find.

"There were two brothers of us. I was the younger. A ship was going to the Arctic Sea." He pointed into the north. "We were both young and ambitious. He was in the army, I the navy. We went with the expedition. At first it was all beautiful and grand, and it seemed noble to search for those others who had gone into that land and never come back. But our ship got locked in the ice, and then came great trouble. A year went by and we did not get free; then another year began. . . .

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Four of us set out for the south. Two died. My brother and I were left—"

Lawless exclaimed. He now remembered how general sympathy went out to a well-known county family when it was announced that two of its members were lost in the Arctic regions.

Detmold continued: "I was the stronger. He grew weaker and weaker. It was awful to live those days; the endless snow and cold, the long nights when you could only hear the whirring of meteors, the bright sun which did not warm you, not even when many suns, the reflections of itself, followed it—the mocking sun dogs, no more the sun than I am what my mother brought into the world. . . . We walked like dumb men, for the dreadful cold fills the heart with bitterness. I think I grew to hate him because he could not travel faster, that days were lost, and death crept on so pitilessly. Sometimes I had a mad wish to kill him. May you never know suffering that begets such things! I laughed as I sat beside him, and saw him sink to sleep and die. . . . I think I could have saved him. When he was gone I—what do men do sometimes when starvation is on them, and they have a hunger of hell to live? I did that shameless thing—and he was my brother! . . . I lived and was saved."

Lawless shrank away from the man, but words of horror got no farther than his throat. And he was glad afterwards that it was so; for when he looked again at this woeful relic of humanity before him he felt a strange pity.

"God's hand is on me to punish," said the man. "It will never be lifted. Death were easy; I bear the infamy of living."

Lawless reached out and caught him gently by the shoulder. "Poor fellow! poor Detmold!" he said.

For an instant the sorrowful face lighted, the square chin trembled, and the hands thrust out towards Lawless, but suddenly dropped.

"Go," he said, humbly, "and leave me here. We must not meet again. . . I have had one moment of respite. . . Go!"

Without a word, Lawless turned and made his way to the Fort. In the morning the three comrades started on their journey again; but no one sped them on their way, or watched them as they went.

The Pilot of Belle Amour

He lived in a hut on a jutting crag of the Cliff of the King. You could get to it by a hard climb up a precipitous pathway, or by a ladder of ropes which swung from his cottage door down the cliff-side to the sands. The bay that washed the sands was called Belle Amour. The cliff was huge, sombre; it had a terrible granite moroseness. If you travelled back from its edge until you stood within the very heart of Labrador, you would add step upon step of barrenness and austerity.

Only at seasons did the bay share the gloom of the cliff. When out of its shadow it was, in summer, very bright and playful, sometimes boisterous, often idle, coquetting with the sands. There was a great difference between the cliff and the bay; the cliff was only as it appeared, but the bay was a shameless hypocrite. For under one shoulder it hid a range of reefs, and, at a spot where the shadows of the cliff never reached it, and the sun played with a grim kind of joy, a long needle of rock ran up at an angle under

the water, waiting to pierce irresistibly the adventurous ship that, in some mad moment, should creep to its shores.

The man was more like the cliff than the bay; stern, powerful, brooding. His only companions were the Indians, who in summertime came and went, getting stores of him, which he in turn got from a post of the Hudson's Bay Company, seventy miles up the coast. At one time the Company, impressed by the number of skins brought to them by the pilot, and the stores he bought of them, had thought of establishing a post at Belle Amour; but they saw that his dealings with them were fair and that he had small gain, and they decided to use him as an unofficial agent, and reap what profit was to be had as things stood. Kenyon, the Company's agent, who had the Post, was keen to know why Gaspard the pilot lived at Belle Amour. No white man sojourned near him, and he saw no one save now and then a priest who travelled silently among the Indians, or some fisherman, hunter, or woodsman, who, for pleasure or from pure adventure, ran into the bay and tasted the hospitality tucked away on the ledge of the Cliff of the King.

To Kenyon Gaspard was unresponsive, however adroit the catechism. Father Dorval also,

who sometimes stepped across the dark threshold of Gaspard's hut, would have, for the man's soul's sake, dug out the heart of his secret; but Gaspard, open with food, fire, blanket, and tireless attendance, closed like the doors of a dungeon when the priest would have read him. At the name of good Ste. Anne he would make the sacred gesture, and would take a blessing when the priest passed from his hut to go again into the wilds; but when pressed to disclose his mind and history, he would always say: "M'sieu', I have nothing to confess." After a number of years the priest ceased to ask him, and he remained with the secret of his life, inscrutable and silent.

Being vigilant, one would have seen however that he lived in some land of memory or anticipation, beyond his life of daily toil and usual dealing. The hut seemed to have been built at a point where east and west and south the great gulf could be seen and watched. It seemed almost ludicrous that a man should call himself a pilot on a coast and at a bay where a pilot was scarce needed once a year. But he was known as Gaspard the pilot, and on those rare occasions when a vessel did anchor in the bay, he performed his duties with such a certainty as to leave unguessed how many death-traps

crouched near that shore. At such times, however, Gaspard seemed to look twenty years younger—a light would come into his face, a stalwart kind of pride sit on him, though there lurked a strange, sardonic look in his deep eyes—such a grim furtiveness as though he should say, "If I but twist my finger we are all for the fishes." But he kept his secret and waited. He never seemed to tire of looking down the gulf, as though expecting some ship. If one appeared and passed on, he merely nodded his head, hung up his glass, returned to his work, or, sitting by the door, talked to himself in low, strange tones. If one came near, making as if it would enter the bay, a hungry joy possessed him. If a storm was on the joy was the greater. No pilot ever ventured to a ship on such rough seas as Gaspard ventured for small profit or glory.

Behind it all lay his secret. There came one day a man who discovered it.

It was Pierre, the half-breed adventurer. There was no point in all the wild northland which Pierre had not touched. He loved it as he loved the game of life. He never said so of it, but he never said so of the game of life, and he played it with a deep subterranean joy. He had had his way with the musk-ox in the Arctic

circle; with the white bear at the foot of Alaskan hills; with the seal in Baffin's Bay; with the puma on the slope of the Pacific; and now at last he had come upon the trail of Labrador. Its sternness, its moodiness pleased him. He smiled at it the comprehending smile of the man who has fingered the nerves and the heart of men and things. As a traveller, wandering through a prison, looks upon its grim cells and dungeons with the eye of unembarrassed freedom, finding no direful significance in the clank of its iron, so Pierre travelled down with a handful of Indians through the hard fastnesses of that country, and, at last, alone, came upon the Bay of Belle Amour.

There was in him some antique touch of refinement and temperament which, in all his evil days and deeds and moments of shy nobility, could find its way into the souls of men with whom the world had had an awkward hour. He was a man of little speech, but he had that rare persuasive penetration which unlocked the doors of trouble, despair and tragedy. Men who could never have confessed to a priest confessed to him. In his every fibre was the granite of the Indian nature which looked upon punishment wlth stoic satisfaction.

In the heart of Labrador he had heard of

Gaspard, and had travelled to that point in the compass where he could find him. One day when the sun was fighting hard to make a pathway of light in front of Gaspard's hut, Pierre rounded a corner of the cliff and fronted Gaspard as he sat there, his eyes gloomily idling with the sea. They said little to each other—in new lands hospitality has not need of speech. When Gaspard and Pierre looked each other in the eyes they knew that one word between them was as a hundred with other men. The heart knows its confessor, and the confessor knows the shadowed eye that broods upon some ghostly secret; and when these are face to face there comes a merciless concision of understanding.

"From where away?" said Gaspard, as he handed some tobacco to Pierre.

"From Hudson's Bay, down the Red Wolf Plains, along the hills, across the coast country, here."

"Why?" Gaspard eyed Pierre's small kit with curiosity, then flung up a piercing, furtive look. Pierre shrugged his shoulders.

"Adventure, adventure," he answered. "The land"—he pointed north, west and east—"is all mine. I am the citizen of every village and every camp of the great north."

The old man turned his head towards a spot

up the shore of Belle Amour, before he turned to Pierre again, with a strange look, and said, "Where do you go?"

Pierre followed his gaze to that point in the shore, felt the undercurrent of vague meaning in his voice, guessed what was his cue, and said: "Somewhere, sometime; but now only Belle Amour. I have had a long travel. I have found an open door. I will stay, if you please, eh? If you please?"

Gaspard brooded. "It is lonely," he said. "This day it is all bright; the sun shines and the little gay waves crinkle to the shore. But *mon Dieu!* sometimes it is all black and ugly with storm. The waves come grinding, booming in along the gridiron rocks"—he smiled a grim smile—"break through the teeth of the reefs, and split with a roar of hell upon the cliff. And all the time, and all the time,"—his voice got low with a kind of devilish joy—"there is a finger—*Jésu!* you should see that finger of the devil stretch up from the bowels of the earth, waiting, waiting for something to come out of the storm. And then—and then you can hear a wild laugh come out of the land, come up from the sea, come down from the sky—all waiting, waiting for something! No, no, you would not stay here."

Pierre looked again to that point in the shore towards which Gaspard's eyes had been cast. The sun was shining hard just then, and the stern, sharp rocks, tumbling awkwardly back into the waste behind, had an insolent harshness. Day perched garishly there. Yet now and then the staring light was broken by sudden and deep shadows—great fissures in the rocks and lanes between. These gave Pierre a suggestion, though why, he could not say. He knew that when men live lives of patient, gloomy vigilance, they generally have something to watch and guard. Why should Gaspard remain here year after year? His occupation was nominally a pilot in a bay rarely touched by vessels, and then only for shelter. A pilot need not take his daily life with such brooding seriousness. In body he was like flexible metal, all cord and muscle. He gave the impression of bigness, though he was small in stature. Yet, as Pierre studied him, he saw something that made him guess the man had had about him one day a woman, perhaps a child; no man could carry that look unless. If a woman has looked at you from day to day, something of her, some reflection of her face, passes to yours and stays there; and if a child has held your hand long, or hung about your

knees, it gives you a kind of gentle wariness as you step about your home.

Pierre knew that a man will cherish with a deep, eternal purpose a memory of a woman or a child, when, no matter how compelling his cue to remember where a man is concerned, he will yield it up in the end to time. Certain speculations arranged themselves definitely in Pierre's mind: there was a woman, maybe a child once; there was some sorrowful mystery about them; there was a point in the shore that had held the old man's eyes strangely; there was the bay with that fantastic "finger of the devil" stretching up from the bowels of the world. Behind the symbol lay the Thing—what was it?

Long time he looked out upon the gulf, then his eyes drew into the bay and stayed there, seeing mechanically, as a hundred fancies went through his mind. There were reefs of which the old man had spoken. He could guess from the color and movement of the water where they were. The finger of the devil—was it not real? A finger of rock, waiting as the old man said—for what?

Gaspard touched his shoulder. He rose and went with him into the gloomy cabin. They ate and drank in silence. When the meal was finished

they sat smoking till night fell. Then the pilot lit a fire, and drew his rough chair to the door. Though it was only late summer, it was cold in the shade of the cliff. Long time they sat. Now and again Pierre intercepted the quick, elusive glance of his silent host. Once the pilot took his pipe from his mouth, and leaned his hands on his knees as if about to speak. But he did not.

Pierre saw that the time was ripe for speech. So he said, as though he knew something: "It is a long time since it happened?"

Gaspard, brooding, answered: "Yes, a long time — too long." Then, as if suddenly awakened to the strangeness of the question, he added, in a startled way: "What do you know? tell me quick what you know."

"I know nothing except what comes to me here, pilot"—he touched his forehead — "but there is a thing—I am not sure what. There was a woman—perhaps a child; there is something on the shore; there is a hidden point of rock in the bay; and you are waiting for a ship — for *the* ship, and it does not come — is n't that so?"

Gaspard got to his feet, and peered into Pierre's immobile face. Their eyes met.

"*Mon Dieu!*" said the pilot, his hand catch-

ing the smoke away from between them, "you are a droll man; you have a wonderful mind. You are cold like ice, and still there is in you a look of fire."

"Sit down," answered Pierre, quietly, "and tell me all. Perhaps I could think it out little by little; but it might take too long — and what is the good?"

Slowly Gaspard obeyed. Both hands rested on his knees, and he stared abstractedly into the fire. Pierre thrust forward the tobacco-bag. His hand lifted, took the tobacco, and then his eyes came keenly to Pierre's. He was about to speak.

"Fill your pipe first," said the half-breed coolly.

The old man did so abstractedly. When the pipe was lighted Pierre said: "Now!"

"I have never told the story, never—not even to Père Corraine. But I know, I have it here" —he put his hand to his forehead, as did Pierre —"that you will be silent —

"She was fine to see. Her eyes were black as beads; and when she laugh it was all music. I was so happy! We lived on the island of the Aux Coudres, far up there at Quebec. It was a wild place. There were smugglers and others there—maybe pirates. But she was like a saint of God among all. I was a lucky man. I was

pilot, and took ships out to sea, and brought them in safe up the gulf. It is not all easy, for there are mad places. Once or twice when a wild storm was on I could not land at Cape Martin, and was carried out to sea and over to France. . . . Well, that was not so bad; there was plenty to eat and drink, nothing to do. But when I marry it was differen'. I was afraid of being carried away and leave my wife — the belle Mamette — alone long time. You see, I was young, and she was ver' beautiful."

He paused and caught his hand over his mouth as though to stop a sound; the lines of his face deepened. Presently he puffed his pipe so hard that the smoke and the sparks hid him in a cloud through which he spoke: "When the child was born—Holy Mother! have you ever felt the hand of your own child in yours, and looked at the mother, as she lies there all pale and shining between the quilts?"

He paused. Pierre's eyes dropped to the floor.

Gaspard continued: "Well, it is a great thing, and the babe was born quick one day when we were all alone. A thing like that gives you wonder. Then I could not bear to go away with the ships, and at last I said — 'One month and then the ice fills the gulf, and there will be

no more ships for the winter. That will be the last for me. I will be pilot no more—no.' She was ver' happy, and a laugh ran over her little white teeth. *Mon Dieu*, I stop that laugh pretty quick—in fine way!"

He seemed for an instant to forget his great trouble, and his face went to warm sunshine like a boy's; but it was as sun playing on a scarred fortress. Presently the light faded out of his face and left it like iron smoldering from the bellows.

"Well," he said, "you see there was a ship to go almost the last of the season, and I said to my wife, 'Mamette, it is the last time I shall be pilot. You must come with me and bring the child, and they will put us off at Father Point, and then we will come back slow to the village on the good Ste. Anne and live there ver' quiet.' When I say that to her she laugh back at me and say, '*Beau! beau!*' and she laugh in the child's eyes, and speak—oh, holy! she speak so gentle and so light—and say to the child, 'Would you like to go with your father a pretty journey down the gulf?' And the little child laugh back at her, and shake its soft brown hair over its head. They were both so glad to go. I went to the captain of the ship. I say to him, 'I will take my wife and my little child,

and when we come to Father Point we will go ashore.' *Bien*, the captain laugh big, and it was all right. That was a long time ago—long time."

He paused again, threw his head back with a despairing toss, his chin dropped on his breast, his hands clasped between his knees, and his pipe, laid beside him on the bench, was forgotten.

Pierre quietly put some wood upon the fire, opened his kit, drew out from it a little flask of rum, and laid it upon the bench beside the pipe. A long time passed. At last Gaspard roused himself with a long sigh, turned and picked up the pipe, but, seeing the flask of rum, lifted it, and took one long swallow before he began to fill and light his pipe. There came into his voice an iron hardness as he continued his story.

"Well, we went into the boat. As we travelled down the gulf a great storm came out of the north. We thought it would pass, but it stayed on. When we got to the last place where the pilot could land, the waves were running like hills to the shore, and no boat could live between the ship and the Point. For myself, it was nothing—I am a strong man and a great swimmer. But when a man has a wife and a

child, it is differen' So the ship went on out into the ocean with us. Well, we laugh a little, and think what a great brain I had when I say to my wife, 'Come and bring the child for the last voyage of Gaspard the pilot.' You see, there we were on board the ship, everything ver' good, plenty to eat, much to drink, to smoke, all the time. The sailors, they were very funny, and to see them take my child, my little Babette, and play with her as she roll on the deck—*merci*, it was grand! So I say to my wife, 'This will be *bon voyage* for all.' But a woman, she has not the mind like a man. When a man laugh in the sun and think nothing of evil, a woman laugh, too, but there come a little quick sob to her lips. You ask her why and she cannot tell. She knows that something will happen. A man has great idee, a woman great sight. So my wife, she turn her face away all sad from me then—she was right—she was right!

"One day in the ocean we pass a ship—only two days out. The ship signal us. I say to my wife, 'Ha, ha! now we can go back, maybe, to the good Ste. Anne.' Well, the ships come close together, and the captain of the other ship he have something importan' with ours. He ask if there will be chance of pilot into the gulf, because it is the first time that he visit Quebec. The cap-

tain swing round and call to me. I go up. I bring my wife and my little Babette; and that was how we sail back to the great gulf!

"When my wife step on board that ship I see her face get pale, and something strange in her eyes. I ask her why; she do not know, but she hug Babette close to her breast with a kind of fear. A long, low, black ship, it could run through every sea. Soon the captain come to me and say, 'You know the coast, the north coast of the gulf, from Labrador to Quebec?' I tell him yes. 'Well,' he say, 'do you know of a bay where few ships enter safe?' I think a moment and I tell him of Belle Amour. Then he say, ver' quick, 'That is the place; we will go to the bay of Belle Amour.' He was ver' kind to my face; he give my wife and child good berth, plenty to eat and drink, and once more I laugh; but my wife—there was in her face something I not understan'. It is not easy to understan' a woman. We got to the bay. I had pride: I was young. I was the best pilot in the St. Lawrence, and I took in the ship between the reefs of the bay, where they run like a gridiron, and I laugh when I swing the ship all ver' quick to the right, after we pass the reefs, and make a curve round—something. The captain pull me up and ask why. But I

never tell him that. I not know why I never tell him. But the good God put the thought into my head, and I keep it to this hour, and it never leave me, never—never!"

He slowly rubbed his hands up and down his knees, took another sip of rum and went on:

"I brought the ship close up to the shore, and we went to anchor. All that night I see the light of a fire on the shore. So I slide down and swim to the shore. Under a little arch of rocks something was going on. I could not tell, but I know from the sound that they are burying something. Then, all at once, it come to me—this is a pirate ship! I come closer and closer to the light, and then I see a dreadful thing. There was the captain and the mate, and another. They turn quick upon two other men—two sailors—and kill them. Then they take the bodies and wind them round some casks in a great hole, and cover it all up. I understand. It is the old legend that a dead body will keep gold all to itself, so that no one shall find it. *Mon Dieu!*"—his voice dropped low and shook in hfs throat—"I give one little cry at the sight, and then they saw me. There was three. They were armed; they spring upon me and tied me. Then they flung me beside the fire, and they cover up the hole with the gold and the bodies.

"When that was done they take me back to the ship, then with pistols at my head they make me pilot the ship out into the bay again. As we went they make a chart of the place. We travel along the coast for one day; and then a great storm of snow come, and the captain say to me, 'Steer us into harbour.' When we are at anchor, they take me and my wife and little child, and put us ashore alone, with a storm and the bare rocks and the dreadful night, and leave us there, that we shall never tell the secret of the gold. That night my wife and my child die in the snow."

Here his voice became strained and slow. "After a long time I work my way to an Injun camp. For months I was a child in strength, all my flesh gone. When the spring come I went and dug a deeper grave for my wife and p'tite Babette, and leave them there, where they had die. But I come to the Bay of Belle Amour, because I knew some day the man with the devil's heart will come back for his gold, and then would arrive my time—the hour of God."

He paused. "The hour of God," he repeated slowly. "I have waited twenty years, but he has not come; yet I know that he will come. I feel it here"—he touched his forehead; "I know it here"—he tapped his heart. "Once where my

heart was, there is only one thing, and it is hate, and I know—I know—that he will come. And when he comes ——" He raised his arm high above his head, laughed wildly, paused, let the hand drop, and then fell to staring in the fire.

Pierre again placed the glass of rum between his fingers. But Gaspard put it down, caught his arms together across his breast, and never turned his face from the fire. Midnight came, and still they sat there silent. No man had a greater gift in waiting than Pierre. Many a time his life had been a swivel, upon which the comedies and tragedies of others had turned. He neither loved nor feared men; sometimes he pitied them. He pitied Gaspard. He knew what it is to have the heartstrings stretched out, one by one, by the hand of a Gorgon, while the feet are chained to the rocking world.

Not till the darkest hour of the morning did the two leave their silent watch and go to bed. The sun had crept stealthily to the door of the hut before they rose again. Pierre laid his hand upon Gaspard's shoulder as they travelled out into the morning, and said: "My friend, I understand. Your secret is safe with me; you shall take me to the place where the gold is buried, but it shall wait there until the time is

ripe. What is gold to me? Nothing. To find gold, that is the trick of any fool. To win it or to earn it is the only game. Let the bodies rot about the gold. You and I will wait. I have many friends in the northland, but there is no face in any tent-door looking for me. You are alone; well, I will stay with you. Who can tell? —perhaps it is near at hand—the hour of God!"

The huge hard hand of Gaspard swallowed the small hand of Pierre, and, in a voice scarcely above a whisper, he answered: "You shall be my comrade. I have told you all, as I have never told it to my God. I do not fear you about the gold; it is all cursed. You are not like other men; I will trust you. Some time you also have had the throat of a man in your fingers, and watch the life spring out of his eyes, and leave them all empty. When men feel like that, what is gold? what is anything? There is food in the bay and on the hills. We will live together, you and I. Come and I will show you the place of hell."

Together they journeyed down the crag and along the beach to the place where the gold, the grim god of this world, was fortressed and bastioned by its victims.

The days went on; the weeks and months ambled by. Still the two lived together. Little

speech passed between them, save that speech of comrades, who use more the sign than the tongue. It seemed to Pierre after a time that Gaspard's wrongs were almost his own. Yet with this difference: he must stand by and let the avenger be the executioner; he must be the spectator merely.

Sometimes he went inland and brought back moose, caribou, and the skins of other animals, thus assisting Gaspard in his dealings with the great Company. But again there were days when he did nothing but lie on the skins at the hut's door, or saunter in the shadows and the sunlight. Not since he had come to Gaspard had a ship passed the bay or sought to anchor in it.

But there came a day. It was the early summer. The snow had shrunk from the ardent sun, and had swilled away to the gulf, leaving the tender grass showing, The moss on the rocks had changed from brown to green, and the vagrant birds had fluttered back from the south. The winter's furs had been carried away in the early spring to the Company's post, by a detachment of *coureurs de bois.* There was little left to do. This morning they sat in the sun, looking out upon the gulf. Presently, Gaspard rose and went into the hut. Pierre's eyes still lazily

scanned the water. As he looked he saw a vessel rounding a point in the distance. Suppose this was the ship of the pirate and murderer? The fancy diverted him. His eyes drew away from the indistinct craft—first to the reefs, and then to that spot where the colossal needle stretched up under the water.

It was as Pierre speculated. Brigond, the French pirate, who had hidden his gold at such shameless cost, was, after twenty years in the galleys at Toulon, come back to find his treasure. He had doubted little that he would find it. The lonely spot, the superstition concerning dead bodies, the supposed doom of Gaspard, all ran in his favor. His little craft came on, manned by as vile a mob as ever mutinied or built a wrecker's fire.

When the ship got within a short distance of the bay Pierre rose and called. Gaspard came to the door.

"There 's work to do, pilot," he said. Gaspard felt the thrill of his voice, and flashed a look out to the gulf. He raised his hands with a gasp. "I feel it," he said: "it is the hour of God!"

He started to the rope ladder of the cliff, then wheeled suddenly and came back to Pierre. "You must not come," he said. "Stay here

and watch; you shall see great things." His voice had a round, deep tone. He caught both Pierre's hands in his and added: "It is for my wife and child; I have no fear! Adieu, my friend! When you see the good Père Corraine say to him—but no, it is no matter—there is One greater!"

Once again he caught Pierre hard by the shoulder, then ran to the cliff and swung down the ladder. All at once there shot through Pierre's body an impulse, and his eyes lighted with excitement. He sprang toward the cliff. "Gaspard, come back!" he called; then paused, and, with an enigmatical smile, shrugged his shoulders, drew back, and waited.

The vessel was hove to outside the bay, as if hesitating. Brigond was considering whether it were better, with his scant chart, to attempt the bay, or to take small boats and make for the shore. He remembered the reefs, but he did not know of the needle of rock.

Presently he saw Gaspard's boat coming. "Some one who knows the bay," he said; "I see a hut on the cliff."

"Hello! who are you?" Brigond called down as Gaspard drew alongside.

"A Hudson's Bay Company's man," answered Gaspard.

"How many are there of you?"

"Myself alone."

"Can you pilot us in?"

"I know the way."

"Come up."

Gaspard remembered Brigond, and he veiled his eyes lest the hate he felt should reveal him. No one could have recognized him as the young pilot of twenty years before. Then his face was cheerful and bright, and in his eye was the fire of youth. Now a thick beard and furrowing lines hid all the look of the past. His voice too was desolate and distant.

Brigond clapped him on the shoulder. "How long have you lived off there?" he asked, as he jerked his finger toward the shore.

"A good many years."

"Did anything strange ever happen there?"

Gaspard felt his heart contract again, as it did when Brigond's hand touched his shoulder.

"Nothing strange is known."

A vicious joy came into Brigond's face. His fingers opened and shut. "Safe, by the holy heaven!" he grunted.

"'By the holy heaven!'" repeated Gaspard, under his breath.

They walked forward. Almost as they did so there came a big puff of wind across the bay:

one of those sudden currents that run in from the ocean and the gulf stream. Gaspard saw, and smiled. In a moment the vessel's nose was towards the bay, and she sailed in, dipping a shoulder to the sudden foam. On she came past reef and bar, a pretty tumbril to the slaughter. The spray feathered up to her sails, the sun caught her on deck and beam; she was running dead for the needle of rock.

Brigond stood at Gaspard's side. All at once Gaspard made the sacred gesture and said, in a low tone, as if only to himself: "*Pardon, mon Capitaine, mon Jésu!*" Then he turned triumphantly, fiercely upon Brigond. The pirate was startled. "What 's the matter?" he said.

Not Gaspard, but the needle rock replied. There was a sudden shock; the vessel stood still and shivered; lurched, swung shoulder downwards, reeled and struggled. Instantly she began to sink.

"The boats! lower the boats!" cried Brigond. "This cursed fool has run us on a rock!"

The waves, running high, now swept over the deck. Brigond started aft, but Gaspard sprang before him. "Stand back," he called. "Where you are you die!"

Brigond, wild with terror and rage, ran at him. Gaspard caught him as he came. With

vast strength he lifted him and dashed him to the deck. "Die there, murderer!" he cried.

Brigond crouched upon the deck, looking at him with fearful eyes. "Who are you?" he asked.

"I am Gaspard the pilot. I have waited for you twenty years. Up there, in the snow, my wife and child died. Here, in this bay, you die!"

Noise and racketing were behind them, but they two heard nothing. The one was alone with his terror, the other with his soul. Once, twice, thrice, the vessel heaved, then suddenly stilled.

Gaspard understood. One look at his victim, then he made the sacred gesture again, and folded his arms.

Pierre, from the height of the cliff, looking down, saw the vessel dip at the bow: and then the waters divided and swallowed it up.

"Gaspard should have lived," he said. "But —who can tell? Perhaps Mamette was waiting for him."

The Cruise of the Ninety-Nine

I. The Search

She was only a big gulf yawl, which a man and a boy could manage at a pinch, with old-fashioned high bulwarks, but lying clean in the water. She had a tolerable record for speed, and for other things so important that they were now and again considered by the Government at Quebec. She was called the *Ninety-Nine.* With a sense of humour the curé had called her so, after an interview with her owner and captain, Tarboe the smuggler. When he said to Tarboe at Angel Point that he had come to seek the one sheep that was lost, leaving behind him the other ninety-and-nine within the fold at Isle of Days, Tarboe had replied that it was a mistake—he was the ninety-nine, for he needed no repentance, and immediately offered the curé some old brown brandy of fine flavour. They both had a whimsical turn, and the curé did not ask Tarboe how he came by such perfect liquor. Many high in authority, it was said, had been soothed even to the winking of an eye

when they ought to have sent a Nordenfelt against the *Ninety-Nine.*

The day after the curé left Angel Point he spoke of Tarboe and his craft as the Ninety-and-Nine; and Tarboe hearing of this—for somehow he heard everything—immediately painted out the old name, and called her the *Ninety-Nine,* saying that she had been so blessed by the curé. Afterwards the *Ninety-Nine* had an increasing reputation for exploit and daring. In brief, Tarboe and his craft were smugglers, and to have trusted gossip would have been to say that the boat was as guilty as the man.

Their names were much more notorious than sweet; and yet in Quebec men laughed as they shrugged their shoulders at them; for as many jovial things as evil were told of Tarboe. When it became known that a dignitary of the Church had been given a case of splendid wine, which had come in a roundabout way to him, men waked in the night and laughed, to the annoyance of their wives; for the same dignitary had preached a powerful sermon against smugglers and the receivers of stolen goods. It was a sad thing for the good man to be called a Ninety-Niner, as were all good friends of Tarboe, high and low. But when he came to know, after the wine had been leisurely drank and becomingly

praised, he brought his influence to bear in civic places, so that there was nothing left to do but to corner Tarboe at last.

It was in the height of summer, when there was little to think of in the old fortressed city, and a dart after a brigand appealed to the romantic natures of the idle French folk, common and gentle.

Through clouds of rank tobacco smoke, and in the wash of their bean soup, the habitants discussed the fate of "Black Tarboe," and officers of the garrison and idle ladies gossiped at the Citadel and at Murray Bay of the freebooting gentleman whose *Ninety-Nine* had furnished forth many a table in the great walled city. But Black Tarboe himself was down at Anticosti waiting for a certain merchantman. Passing vessels saw the *Ninety-Nine* anchored in an open bay, flying its flag flippantly before the world—a rag of black sheepskin, with the wool on, in profane keeping with its name.

There was no attempt at hiding, no skulking behind a point, or scurrying from observation, but an indolent and insolent waiting—for something. "Black Tarboe's getting reckless!" said one captain coming in, and another going out grinned as he remembered the talk at Quebec, and thought of the sport provided for the *Ninety-Nine*

when she should come up stream, as she must in due time, for Tarboe's home was on the Isle of Days, and was not he fond and proud of his daughter Joan to a point of folly? He was not alone in his admiration of Joan, for the curé at Isle of Days said high things of her.

Perhaps this was because she was unlike most other girls, and women too, in that she had a sense of humour, got from having mixed with choice spirits who visited her father and carried out at Angel Point a kind of freemasonry, which had few rites and many charges and counter-charges. She had that almost impossible gift in a woman—the power of telling a tale whimsically. It was said that once, when Orvay Lafarge, a new Inspector of Customs, came to spy out the land, she kept him so amused by her quaint wit that he sat in the doorway gossiping with her while Tarboe and two others unloaded and safely hid away a cargo of liquors from the *Ninety-Nine.* And one of the men, as cheerful as Joan herself, undertook to carry a little keg of brandy into the house, under the very nose of the young inspector, who had sought to mark his appointment by the detection and arrest of Tarboe single-handed. He had never met Tarboe or Tarboe's daughter when he made his boast. If his superiors had known that Loce Bissonnette,

Tarboe's jovial lieutenant, had carried the keg of brandy into the house in a water-pail, not fifteen feet from where Lafarge sat with Joan, they might have asked for his resignation. True, the thing was cleverly done, for Bissonnette made the water spill quite naturally against his leg, and when he turned to Joan and said in a crusty way that he did n't care if he spilled all the water in the pail, he looked so like an unwilling water-carrier that Joan for one little moment did not guess. When she understood she laughed till the tears came to her eyes, and presently, because Lafarge seemed hurt, gave him to understand that he was upon his honour if she told him what it was. He consenting, she, still laughing, asked him into the house, and then drew the keg from the pail, before his eyes, and, tapping it, gave him some liquor, which he accepted without churlishness. He found nothing in this to lessen her in his eyes, for he knew that women have no civic virtues.

He drank to their better acquaintance with few compunctions, a matter not scandalous, for there is nothing like a witty woman to turn a man's head, and there was not so much at stake after all. Tarboe had gone on for many a year till his trade seemed like the romance of law rather than its breach. It is safe to say that

Lafarge was a less sincere if not a less blameless customs officer from this time forth. For humour on a woman's lips is a potent thing, as any man knows that has kissed it off in laughter.

As we said, Tarboe lay rocking in a bight at Anticosti with an empty hold and a scanty larder. Still, he was in no ill-humor, for he smoked much and talked more than common. Perhaps that was because Joan was with him — an unusual thing. She was as good a sailor as her father, but she did not care, nor did he, to have her mixed up with him in his smuggling. So far as she knew, she had never been on board the *Ninety-Nine* when it carried a smuggled cargo. She had not broken the letter of the law. Her father, on asking her to come on this cruise, had said that it was a pleasure trip, to meet a vessel in the gulf.

The pleasure had not been remarkable, though there had been no bad weather. The coast of Anticosti is cheerless, and it is possible even to tire of sun and water. True, Bissonnette played the concertina with passing sweetness, and sang as little like a wicked smuggler as one might think. But there were boundaries even to that, as there were to his lovemaking, which was, however, so interwoven with laughter

that it was impossible to think the matter serious. Sometimes of an evening Joan danced on deck to the music of the concertina—dances which had their origin largely with herself: fantastic, touched off with some unexpected sleight of foot—almost uncanny at times to Bissonnette, whose temperament could hardly go her distance when her mood was as this.

Tarboe looked on with a keener eye and understanding, for was she not bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh? Who was he that he should fail to know her? He saw the moonlight play on her face and hair, and he waved his head with the swaying of her body, and smacked his lips in thought of the fortune, which, smuggling days over, would carry them up to St. Louis Street, Quebec, there to dwell as in a garden of good things.

After many days had passed, Joan tired of the concertina, of her own dancing, of her father's tales, and became inquisitive. So at last she said: "Father, what 's all this for?"

Tarboe did not answer her at once, but, turning to Bissonnette, asked him to play "The Demoiselle with the Scarlet Hose." It was a gay little demoiselle, according to Bissonnette, and through the creaking, windy gaiety Tarboe and his daughter could talk without being

heard by the musician. Tarboe lit another cigar—that badge of greatness in the eyes of his fellow-habitants, and said:

"What's all this for, Joan? Why, we're here for our health." His teeth bit on the cigar with enjoyable emphasis.

"If you don't tell me what's in the wind, you'll be sorry. Come, where's the good! I've got as much head as you have, father, and—"

"*Mon Dieu!* Much more. That's not the question. It was to be a surprise to you."

"Pshaw! You can only have one minute of surprise, and you can have months of fun looking out for a thing. I don't want surprises; I want what you've got—the thing that's kept you good-tempered while we lie here like snails on the rocks."

"Well, my cricket, if that's the way you feel, here you are. It is a long story, but I will make it short. Once there was a pirate called Brigond, and he brought into a bay on the coast of Labrador a fortune in some kegs—gold, gold! He hid it in a cave, wrapping around it the dead bodies of two men. It is thought that no one can ever find it so. He hid it, and sailed away. He was captured, and sent to prison in France for twenty years.

Then he came back with a crew and another ship, and sailed into the bay, but his ship went down within sight of the place. And so the end of him and all. But wait. There was one man, the mate on the first voyage. He had been put in prison also. He did not get away as soon as Brigond. When he was free he come to the captain of a ship that I know, the *Free-and-Easy*, that sails to Havre, and told him the story, asking for a passage to Quebec. The captain—Gobal—did not believe it, but said he would bring him over on the next voyage. Gobal come to me and told me all there was to tell. I said that it was a true story, for Pretty Pierre told me once he saw Brigond's ship go down in the bay; but he would not say how, or why or where. Pierre would not lie in a thing like that, and—"

"Why did n't he get the gold himself?"

"What is money to him? He is a gypsy. To him the money is cursed. He said so. *Eh bien!* some wise men are fools, one way or another. Well, I told Gobal I would give the man the *Ninety-Nine* for the cruise and search, and that we should divide the gold between us, if it was found, first taking out enough to make a dot for you and a fine handful for Bissonnette. But no, shake not your head like that. It shall

be so. Away went Gobal four months ago, and I get a letter from him weeks past, just after Whitsunday, to say he would be here some time in the first of July, with the man. Well, it is a great game. The man is a pirate, but it does not matter, he has paid for that. I thought you would be glad of a fine adventure like that, so I said to you, 'Come.' "

"But, father ——"

"If you do not like you can go on with Gobal in the *Free-and-Easy*, and you shall be landed at the Isle of Days. That 's all. We 're waiting here for Gobal. He promised to stop just outside this bay and land our man on us. Then, blood of my heart, away we go after the treasure!"

Joan's eyes flashed. Adventure was in her as deep as life itself. She had been cradled in it, reared in it, lived with it, and here was no law-breaking. Whose money was it? No one's, for who should say what ship it was, or what people were robbed by Brigond and those others? Gold, that was a better game than wine and brandy, and for once her father would be on a cruise which would not be, as it were, sailing in forbidden waters.

"When do you expect Gobal?" she asked eagerly.

"He ought to have been here a week ago. Maybe he has had a bad voyage or something."

"He 's sure to come ?"

"Of course. I found out about that. She 's got a big consignment to people in Quebec. Something has gone wrong, but she 'll be here—yes."

"What will you do if you get the money ?" she asked.

Tarboe laughed heartily. "My faith ! come, play up them scarlet hose, Bissonette ! My faith ! I 'll go into Parliament at Quebec. Thunder ! I will have sport with them. I 'll reform the customs. There shan't be any more smuggling. The people of Quebec 'll drink no more good wine, no one except Black Tarboe, the member for Isle of Days."

Again he laughed, and his eyes spilt fire like revolving wheels. For a moment Joan was quiet, her face was shining like the sun on a river. She saw more than her father, for she saw release. A woman may stand by a man who breaks the law, but in her heart she always has bitterness, for that the world shall speak well of herself and what she loves is the secret desire of every woman. In her heart she never can defy the world as does a man.

She had carried off the situation as became

the daughter of a daring adventurer, who in more stirring times might have been a Du Lhut or a Rob Roy, but she was sometimes tired of the fighting, sometimes wishful that she could hold her position easier. Suppose the present good curé should die and another less considerate arrive, how hard might her position become. Then, she had a spirit above her station, as have most people who know the world and have seen something of its forbidden side; for it is notable that wisdom comes not alone from loving good things, but from having seen evil as well as good. Besides, Joan was not a woman to go singly to her life's end.

There was scarcely a man on Isle of Days and in the parish of Ste. Eunice, on the mainland, but would gladly have taken to wife the daughter of Tarboe the smuggler, and it is likely that the curé of either parish would not have advised against it.

Joan had had the taste of the lawless, and now she knew, as she sat and listened to Bissonnette's music, that she also could dance for joy, in the hope of a taste of the lawful. With this money, if it were got, there could be another life — in Quebec. She could not forbear laughing now, as she remembered that first day she had seen Orvay Lafarge, and she said to Bissonnette:

"Loce, do you mind the keg in the water-pail?" Bissonnette paused on an out-pull and threw back his head with a soundless laugh, then played the concertina into contortions.

"That Lafarge! H'm! He is very polite; but, pshaw, it is no use that, in whiskey-running. To beat a great man, a man must be great. Tarboe Noir can lead M'sieu' Lafarge all like that!"

It seemed as if he were pulling the nose of the concertina. Tarboe began tracing a kind of maze with his fingers on the deck, his eyes rolling outward like an endless puzzle. But presently he turned sharp on Joan.

"How many times have you met him?" he asked.

"Oh, six or seven—eight or nine, perhaps."

Her father stared. "Eight or nine? By the holy! Is it like that? Where have you seen him?"

"Twice at our home, as you know; two or three times at dances at the Belle Châtelaine, and the rest when we were at Quebec, in May. He is amusing, M'sieu' Lafarge."

"Yes, two of a kind," remarked Tarboe drily, and then told his schemes to Joan, letting Bissonnette hang up "The Demoiselle with the Scarlet Hose," and begin "The Coming of the

Gay Cavalier." She entered into his plans with spirit, and together they speculated what bay it might be, of the many on the coast of Labrador.

They spent two days longer waiting, and then at dawn a merchantman came sauntering up to anchor. She signalled to the *Ninety-Nine*. In five minutes Tarboe was climbing up the side of the *Free-and-Easy*, and presently was in Gobal's cabin, with a glass of wine in his hand.

"What kept you, Gobal?" he said. "You 're ten days late, at least."

"Storm and sickness—broken mainmast and smallpox." Gobal was not cheerful.

Tarboe caught at something. "You 've got our man?"

Gobal drank off his wine slowly. "Yes," he said.

"Well? Why do n't you fetch him?"

'You can see him below."

"The man has legs, let him walk here. Hello! my Gobal, what 's the matter? If he 's here, bring him up. We 've no time to lose."

"Tarboe, the fool got smallpox and died three hours ago—the tenth man since we started. We 're going to give him to the fishes. They 're putting him in his linen now."

Tarboe's face hardened. Disaster did not dis-

may him, it either made him ugly or humorous, and one phase was as dangerous as the other.

"D 'ye mean to say," he groaned, "that the game is up? is it all finished? Sweat o' my soul, my soul crawls like hot tin! Is it the end, eh? The beast, to die!"

Gobal's eyes glistened. He had sent up the mercury, he would now bring it down.

"Not such a beast as you think. A live pirate, a convict as comrade in adventure, is not sugar in the teeth. This one was no better than the worst. Well, he died. That was awkward. But he give me the chart of the bay before he died—and that was damn square."

Tarboe held out his hand eagerly, the big fingers bending claw-like.

"Give it me, Gobal!" he said.

"Wait. There 's no hurry. Come along, there 's the bell; they 're going to drop him."

He coolly motioned, and passed out from the cabin to the ship's side. Tarboe kept his tongue from blasphemy and his hand from the captain's shoulder, for he knew only too well that Gobal held the game in his hands. They leaned over and saw two sailors with something on a plank.

"We therefore commit his body to the deep, in the knowledge of the Judgment Day—let her go!" grunted Gobal; and a long straight canvas

bundle shot with a swishing sound beneath the water. "It was rough on him, too," he continued; "he waited twenty years to have his chance again. Damn me, if I did n't feel as if I 'd hit him in the eye somehow when he begged me to keep him alive long enough to have a look at the rhino. But it was n't no use. He had to go, and I told him so. Then he did the nice thing; he give me the chart. But he made me swear on a book of the Mass that if we got the gold we 'd send one-half his share to a woman in Paris, and the rest to his brother, a priest at Nancy. I 'll keep my word—but yes! Eh, Tarboe?"

"You can keep your word for me! What, you think, Gobal, there is no honor in Black Tarboe, and you 've known me ten years! Have n 't I always kept my word like a clock?"

Gobal stretched out his hand. "Like the sun—sure. That 's enough. We 'll stand by my oath. You shall see the chart."

Going again inside the cabin, Gobal took out a map grimed with ceaseless fingering, and showed it to Tarboe, putting his finger on the spot where the treasure lay.

"The Bay of Belle Amour!" cried Tarboe, his eyes flashing. "Ah, I know it. That 's where Gaspard the pilot lived. It 's only forty

leagues or so from here." His fingers ran here and there on the map. "Yes, yes," he continued, "it 's so, but he has n't placed the reef right. Ah, here is how Brigond's ship went down. There 's a needle of rock in the bay. It is n't here.

Gobal handed the chart over. "I can 't go with you, but I take your word; I can say no more. If you cheat me, I 'll kill you; that 's all."

"Let me give a bond," said Tarboe quickly. "If I saw much gold perhaps I could n't trust myself, but there 's some one to be trusted, who 'll swear for me. If my daughter Joan give her word—"

"Is she with you?"

"Yes, in the *Ninety-Nine*, now. I 'll send Bissonnette for her. Yes, yes, I 'll send, for gold is worse than bad whisky when it gets into a man's head. Joan will speak for me."

Ten minutes later Joan was in Gobal's cabin, guaranteeing for her father the fulfillment of his bond. An hour afterwards the *Free-and-Easy* was moving up stream with her splintered masts and ragged sails, and the *Ninety-Nine* was looking up and over towards the Bay of Belle Amour. She reached it in the late afternoon of the next day. Bissonnette did not know the

object of the expedition, but he had caught the spirit of the affair, and his eyes were like spots of fire as he held the sheet or took his turn at the tiller. Joan's eyes were now on the sky, now on the sail, and now on the land, weighing as wisely as her father the advantage of the wind, yet dwelling on that cave where skeletons kept ward over the spoils of a pirate ship.

They arrived, and Tarboe took the *Ninety-Nine* warily in on a little wind off the land. He came near sharing the fate of Brigond, for the yawl grazed the needle of the rock that, hiding away in the water, with a nose out for destruction, awaits its victims. They reached safe anchorage, but by the time they landed it was night, with, however, a good moon showing.

All night they searched, three silent, eager figures, drawing step by step nearer the place where the ancient enemy of man was barracked about by men's bodies. It was Joan, who, at last, as dawn drew up, discovered the hollow between two great rocks where the treasure lay. A few minutes' fierce digging, and the kegs of gold were disclosed, showing through the ribs of two skeletons. Joan shrank back, but the two men tossed aside the rattling bones, and presently the kegs were standing between them on the open shore. Bissonnette's eyes were hungry—he knew

now the wherefore of the quest. He laughed outright, a silly, loud, hysterical laugh. Tarboe's eyes shifted from the sky to the river, from the river to the kegs, from the kegs to Bissonette. On him they stayed a moment. Bissonette shrank back. Tarboe was feeling for the first time in his life the deadly suspicion which comes with ill-gotten wealth. This passed as his eyes and Joan's met, for she had caught the melodrama, the overstrain. Bissonnette's laugh had pointed the situation, and her sense of humour had prevailed. "La, la," she said, with a whimsical quirk of the head, and no apparent relevancy:

"Lady-bird, lady-bird, fly away home,
Your house is on fire, and your children all gone."

The remedy was good. Tarboe's eyes came again to their natural liveliness, and Bissonnette said:

"My throat's like a piece of sandpaper."

Tarboe handed over a brandy flask, after taking a pull himself, and then sitting down on one of the kegs, he said: "It is as you see, and now Angel Point very quick. To get it there safe, that's the point!" Then, scanning the sky closely: "It's for a handsome day, and the wind goes to bear us up fine. Good! Well,

for you, Bissonnette, there shall be a thousand dollars; you shall have the Belle Chatelaine Inn and the little lady at Point Pierrot. For the rest, you shall keep a quiet tongue, eh? If not, my Bissonnette, we shall be the best of strangers, and you shall not be happy. Eh?"

Bissonnette's eyes flashed. "The Belle Chatelaine? Good! that is enough. My tongue is tied; I cannot speak; it is fastened with a thousand pegs."

"Very good, a thousand gold pegs, and you shall never pull them. The little lady will have you with them, not without; and unless you stand by me, no one will have you at any price—by God!"

He stood up, but Joan put out her hand. "You have been speaking, now it is my turn. Do n't cry cook until you have your ven'son home. What is more, I gave my word to Gobal, and I will keep it. I will be captain. No talking! When you 've got the kegs in the cellar at Angel Point, good! But now—come, my comrades, I am your captain."

She was making the thing a cheerful adventure, and the men now swung the kegs on their shoulders and carried them to the boat. In another half-hour they were under way in the gaudy light of an orange sunrise, a simmering

wind from the sea lifting them up the river, and the grey-red coast of Labrador shrinking sullenly back.

About this time, also, a Government cutter was putting out from under the mountain-wall at Quebec, its officer in command having got renewed orders from the Minister to bring in Tarboe the smuggler. And when Mr. Martin, the inspector in command of the expedition, was ordered to take with him Mr. Orvay Lafarge and five men, "effectively armed," it was supposed by the romantic Minister that the matter was as good as done.

What Mr. Orvay Lafarge did when he got the word was to go straight to his hat-peg, then leave the office, walk to the little club where he spent leisure hours—called office hours by people who wished to be precise as well as suggestive—sit down, and raise a glass to his lips. After which he threw himself back in his chair and said:

"Well, I'm particularly damned!"

A few hours later they were away on their doubtful exploit.

II. The Defence.

On the afternoon of the second day after she left Labrador, the *Ninety-Nine* came rippling near Isle of Fires, not sixty miles from her destination, catching a fair wind on her quarter off the land. Tarboe was in fine spirits, Joan was as full of song as a canary, and Bissonnette was as busy watching her as in keeping the nose of the *Ninety-Nine* pointing for Cap de Gloire. Tarboe was giving the sail full to the wind, and thinking how he would just be able to reach Angel Point and get his treasure housed before mass in the morning.

Mass! How many times had he laughed as he sat in church and heard the curé have his gentle fling at smuggling! To think that the hidingplace for his liquor was the unused, almost unknown, cellar of that very church, built a hundred years before as a refuge from the Indians, which he had reached by digging a tunnel from the shore to its secret passage! That was why the customs officers never found anything at Angel Point, and that was why Tarboe much loved going to mass. He sometimes thought he could catch the flavor of the brands as he leaned his forehead on the seat before him. But this time he would go to mass

with a fine handful of those gold pieces in his pocket, just to keep him in a commendable mood. He laughed out loud at the thought of doing so within a stone's throw of a fortune and nose-shot of fifty kegs of brandy.

As he did so, Bissonnette gave a little cry. They were coming on to Cap de Gloire at the moment, and Tarboe and Joan, looking, saw a boat standing off towards the mainland, as if waiting for them. Tarboe gave a roar, and called to Joan to take the tiller. He snatched a glass and levelled it.

"A Government tug!" he said, "and, by the Holy Mother, there's your tall Lafarge among 'em, Joan! I'd know him by his height miles off."

Joan lost colour a trifle and then got courage. "Pshaw!" she said, "what does he want?"

"Want! Want! He wants the *Ninety-Nine* and her cargo; but by the sun of my soul, he'll get her across the devil's gridiron! See here, my girl, this ain't any sport with you aboard. Bissonnette and I could make a stand for it alone, but what's to become of you? I don't want you mixed up in the mess."

The girl was eyeing the Government boat. "But I'm in it, and I can't be out of it, and I don't want to be out now that I am in. Let me see the glass." She took it in one hand.

"Yes, it must be M'sieu' Lafarge," she said, frowning. "He might have stayed out of this."

"When he's got orders, he has to go," answered her father; "but he must look out, for a gun is a gun, and I do n't pick and choose. Besides, I've no contraband this cruise, and I'll let no one stick me up."

"There are six or seven of them," said Joan debatingly.

"Bring her up to the wind," shouted Tarboe to Bissonnette. The mainsail closed up several points, the *Ninety-Nine* slackened her pace and edged in closer to the land. "Now, my girl," said Tarboe, "this is how it stands: If we fight, there's some one sure to be hurt, and if I'm hurt where'll you be?"

Bissonnette interposed: "We've got nothing contraband. The gold is ours."

"Trust that crew—but no!" cried Tarboe, with an oath. "The Government would hold the rhino for possible owners, and then give it to a convent or something. They shan't put foot here. They've said war, and they'll get it! They're signalling us to stop, and they're bearing down. There goes a shot!"

The girl had been watching the Government boat coolly. Now that it began to bear on she answered her father's question.

"Captain," she said, like a trusted mate, "we'll bluff them." Her eyes flashed with the intelligence of war. "Here, quick, I'll take the tiller. They haven't seen Bissonnette yet, he sits low. Call all hands on deck—shout! Then, see: Loce will go down to the middle hatch, get a gun, come up with it on his shoulder, and move to the fo'castle. Then he'll drop down the fo'castle hatch, get along to the middle hatch, and come up again with the gun, now with his cap, now without it, now with his coat, now without it. He'll do that till we've got twenty or thirty men on deck. They'll think we've been laying for them, and they'll not come on—you see?"

Tarboe ripped out an oath. "It's a great game," he said, and a moment afterwards, in response to his roars, Bissonnette came up the hatch with his gun showing bravely; then again and again, now with his cap, now without, now with his coat, now with none, anon with a tarpaulin over his shoulders grotesquely. Meanwhile Tarboe trained his one solitary little cannon on the enemy, roaring his men into place.

From the tug it seemed that a large and well-armed crew were ranging behind the bulwarks of the *Ninety-Nine*. Mr. Martin, the inspector,

saw with alarm Bissonnette's constantly appearing rifle.

"They 've arranged a plant for us, Mr. Lafarge. What do you think we 'd better do?" he said.

"Fight!" answered Lafarge laconically. He wished to put himself on record, for he was the only one on board who saw through the ruse.

"But I 've counted at least twenty men, all armed, and we 've only five."

"As you please, sir," said Lafarge bluntly, angry at being tricked, but inwardly glad to be free of the business, for he pictured to himself that girl at the tiller—he had seen her as she went aft—in a police court at Quebec. Yet his instinct for war and his sense of duty impelled him to say, "Still, sir, fight."

"No, no, Mr. Lafarge," excitedly said his chief. "I cannot risk it. We must go back for more men and bring along a Gatling. Slow down!" he called.

Lafarge turned on his heel with an oath, and stood watching the *Ninety-Nine.*

"She 'll laugh at me till I die!" he said to himself presently, as the tug turned up the stream and pointed for Quebec. "Well, I 'm jiggered!" he added, as a cannon shot came

ringing over the water after them. He was certain also that he heard loud laughter. No doubt he was right; for as the tug hurried on, Tarboe ran to Joan, hugged her like a bear, and roared till he ached. Then she paid out the sheet, they clapped on all sail, and travelled in the track of the enemy.

Tarboe's spirit was roused. He was not disposed to let his enemy off on even such terms, so he now turned to Joan and said: "What say you to a chase of the gentleman?"

Joan was in a mood for such a dare-devil adventure. For three people, one of whom was a girl, to give chase to a well-manned, well-armed Government boat was too good a relish to be missed. Then, too, it had just occurred to her that a parley would be amusing, particularly if she and Lafarge were the truce-bearers. So she said: "That is very good."

"Suppose they should turn and fight?" suggested Bissonnette.

"That 's true—here 's Joan," agreed Tarboe.

"But see," said Joan. "If we chase them and call upon them to surrender—and after all, we can prove that we had nothing contraband—what a splendid game it 'll be!" Mischief flickered in her eyes.

"Good!" said Tarboe. "Tomorrow I

shall be a rich man, and then they 'll not dare to come again."

So saying, he gave his sail to the wind, and away the *Ninety-Nine* went after the one ewe lamb of the Government.

Mr. Martin saw her coming, and gave word for all steam. It would be a pretty game, for the wind was in Tarboe's favour, and the general advantage was not greatly with the tug. Mr. Martin was now anxious indeed to get out of the way of the smuggler. Lafarge made one restraining effort, then settled into an ironical mood. Yet a half-dozen times he was inclined to blurt out to Martin what he believed was the truth. A man, a boy, and a girl to bluff them that way! In his bones he felt that it was the girl who was behind this thing. Of one matter he was sure—they had no contraband stuff on board, or Tarboe would not have brought his daughter along. He could not understand their attitude, for Tarboe would scarcely have risked the thing out of mere bravado. Why not call a truce? Perhaps he could solve the problem. They were keeping a tolerably safe distance apart, and there was no great danger of the *Ninety-Nine* overhauling them, even if it so willed, but Mr. Martin did not know that.

What he said to his chief had its effect, and soon there was a white flag flying on the tug. It was at once answered with a white handkerchief of Joan's. Then the tug slowed up, the *Ninety-Nine* came on gaily, and at a good distance came up to the wind and stood off.

"What do you want?" asked Tarboe through his speaking-tube.

"A parley," called Mr. Martin.

"Good; send an officer," answered Tarboe.

A moment after, Lafarge was in a boat rowing over to meet another boat rowed by Joan alone, who, dressed in a suit of Bissonnette's, had prevailed on her father to let her go.

The two boats nearing each other, Joan stood up, saluting, and Lafarge did the same.

"Good-day, m'sieu'," said Joan, with assumed brusqueness, mischief lurking about her mouth. "What do you want?"

"Good-day, monsieur; I did not expect to confer with you."

"M'sieu'," said Joan, with well-acted dignity, "if you prefer to confer with the captain or Mr. Bissonette, whom I believe you know in the matter of a pail, and—"

"No, no; pardon me, monsieur," said Lafarge more eagerly than was good for the play, "I am

glad to confer with you, you will understand—you will understand—" He paused.

"What will I understand?"

"You will understand that I understand!" Lafarge waved meaningly towards the *Ninety-Nine*, but it had no effect at all. Joan would not give the game over into his hands.

"That sounds like a charade or a puzzle game. We are gentlemen on a serious errand, are n't we?"

"Yes," answered Lafarge, "perfect gentlemen on a perfectly serious errand!"

"Very well, m'sieu'. Have you come to surrender?"

The splendid impudence of the thing stunned Lafarge, but he said: "I suppose one or the other ought to surrender, and naturally," he added, with point, "it should be the weaker."

"Very well. Our captain is willing to consider conditions. You came down on us to take us—a quiet craft sailing in free waters. You attack us without cause. We summon all hands, and you run. We follow, you ask for truce. It is granted, We are not hard, no! We only want our rights. Admit them; we 'll make surrender easy, and the matter is over."

Lafarge gasped. She was forcing his hand. She would not understand his oblique sugges-

tions. He saw only one way now, and that was to meet her, boast for boast.

"I have n't come to surrender," he said, "but to demand."

"M'sieu'," Joan said grandly, "there's nothing more to say. Carry word to your captain that we 'll overhaul him by sundown, and sink him before supper."

Lafarge burst out laughing.

"Well, by the Lord, but you 're a swashbuckler, Joan—"

"M'sieu'—!"

"O, nonsense! I tell you, nonsense! Let's have over with this, my girl. You 're the cleverest woman on the continent, but there 's a limit to everything. Here, tell me now, and if you answer me straight I 'll say no more."

"M'sieu', I am here to consider conditions, not to—"

"Oh, for God's sake, Joan! Tell me now, have you got anything contraband on board? There 'll be a nasty mess about the thing, for me and all of us, and why can 't we compromise? I tell you honestly we'd have come on if I had n't seen you aboard."

Joan turned her head back with a laugh. "My poor m'sieu'! You have such bad luck. Contraband? Let me see? Liquors and wines

and tobacco are contraband. Is it not so?" Lafarge nodded.

"Is money—gold—contraband?"

"Money? No; of course not, and you know it. Why won't you be sensible? You 're getting me into a bad hole, and ——"

"I want to see how you 'll come out. If you come out well ——" She paused quaintly.

"Yes, if I come out well —— ?"

"If you come out very well, and we do not sink you before supper, I may ask you to come and see me."

"H'm! Is that all? After spoiling my reputation, I 'm to be let come and see you."

"Is n't that enough to start with? What has spoiled your reputation?"

"A man, a boy and a slip of a girl." He looked meaningly enough at her now. She laughed. "See," he added, "give me a chance. Let me search the *Ninety-Nine* for contraband, that 's all I have got to do with, and then I can keep quiet about the rest. If there 's no contraband, whatever else there is, I 'll hold my tongue."

"I 've told you what there is."

He did not understand. "Will you let me search?"

Joan's eyes flashed. "Once and for all, no, Orvay Lafarge! I am the daughter of a man

whom you and your men would have killed or put in the dock. He 's been a smuggler, and I know it. Who has he robbed? Not the poor, not the needy, but a rich Government that robs also. Well, in the hour when he ceases to be a smuggler for ever, armed men come to take him. Why did n't they do so before? Why so pious all at once? No, I am first the daughter of my father, and afterwards ——"

"And afterwards?"

"What tomorrow may bring forth."

Lafarge became very serious. "I must go back. Mr. Martin is signalling, and your father is calling. I do not understand, but you 're the one woman in the world for my money, and I 'm ready to stand by that and leave the customs to-morrow if need be."

Joan's eyes blazed, her cheek was afire. "Leave it today. Leave it now. Yes; that 's my one condition. If you want me, and you say you do, come aboard the *Ninety-Nine*, and for today be one of us — tomorrow what you will."

"What I will? What I will, Joan? Do you mean it?"

"Yes. Pshaw! Your duty? Do n't I know how the Ministers and the officers have done their duty at Quebec? It 's all nonsense. You must make your choice once for all now."

Lafarge stood a moment thinking. "Joan, I 'll do it. I 'd go hunting in hell at your bidding. But see. Everything 's changed. I could n't fight against you, but I can fight for you. All must be open now. You 've said there 's no contraband. Well, I 'll tell Mr. Martin so, but I 'll tell him also that you 've only a crew of two—"

"Of three, now!"

"Of three! I will do my duty in that, then resign and come over to you, if I can."

"If you can? You mean that they may fire on you?"

"I can 't tell what they may do. But I must deal fair."

Joan's face was grave. "Very well, I will wait for you here."

"They might hit you."

"But no. They can 't hit a wall. Go on, my dear."

They saluted, and, as Lafarge turned away, Joan said, with a little mocking laugh, "Tell him that he must surrender, or we 'll sink him before supper."

Lafarge nodded, and drew away quickly towards the tug. His interview with Mr. Martin was brief, and he had tendered his resignation, though it was disgracefully informal, and was

over the side of the boat again and rowing quickly away before his chief recovered his breath. Then Mr. Martin got a large courage. He called to his men to fire when Lafarge was about two hundred and fifty feet from the tug. The shots rattled about him. He turned round coolly and called out, "Coward—we 'll sink you before supper!"

A minute afterwards there came another shot, and an oar dropped from his hand. But now Joan was rowing rapidly towards him, and presently was alongside.

"Quick, jump in here," she said. He did so, and she rowed on quickly. Tarboe did not understand, but now his blood was up, and as another volley sent bullets dropping around the two he gave the *Ninety-Nine* to the wind, and she came bearing down smartly to them. In a few moments they were safely on board, and Joan explained. Tarboe grasped Lafarge's unmaimed hand—the other Joan was caring for—and swore that fighting was the only thing left now.

Mr. Martin had said the same, but when he saw the *Ninety-Nine* determined, menacing, and coming on, he became again uncertain, and presently gave orders to make for the lighthouse on the opposite side of the river. He could get

over first, for the *Ninety-Nine* would not have the wind so much in her favor, and there entrench himself, for even yet Bissonnette amply multiplied was in his mind,—Lafarge had not explained that away. He was in the neighborhood of some sunken rocks of which he and his man at the wheel did not know accurately, and in making what he thought was a clear channel he took a rock with great force, for they were going full steam ahead. Then came confusion, and in getting out the one boat it was swamped and a man nearly drowned. Meanwhile the tug was fast sinking.

While they were throwing off their clothes, the *Ninety-nine* came down, and stood off. On one hand was the enemy, on the other the water, with the shore half a mile distant.

"Do you surrender?" called out Tarboe.

"Can't we come aboard without that?" feebly urged Mr. Martin.

"I'll see you damned first, Mr. Martin. Come quick, or I'll give you what for."

"We surrender," answered the officer gently.

A few minutes later he and his men were on board, with their rifles stacked in a corner at Bissonnette's hand.

Then Tarboe brought the *Ninety-Nine* close to the wreck, and with his little cannon put a

ball into her. This was the finish. She shook her nose, shivered, shot down like a duck, and was gone.

Mr. Martin was sad even to tears.

"Now, my beauties," said Tarboe, "now that I've got you safe, I'll show you the kind of cargo I've got."

A moment afterwards he hoisted a keg on deck. "Think that's whisky?" he asked. "Lift it, Mr. Martin." Mr. Martin obeyed. "Shake it," he added. Mr. Martin did so. "Open it, Mr. Martin." He held out a hatchet-hammer. The next moment a mass of gold pieces yellowed to their eyes. Mr. Martin fell back, breathing hard.

"Is that contraband, Mr. Martin?"

"Treasure-trove," humbly answered the stricken officer.

"That's it, and in a month, Mr. Martin, I'll be asking the chief of your department to dinner."

Meanwhile Lafarge saw how near he had been to losing a wife and a fortune. Arrived off Isle of Days, Tarboe told Mr. Martin and his men that if they said "treasure-trove" till they left the island their lives would not be worth "a tinker's damn." When they had sworn, he took them to Angel Point, fed them royally, gave

them excellent liquor to drink, and sent them in a fishing-smack with Bissonnette to Quebec, where arriving, they told strange tales.

Bissonnette bore a letter to a certain banker in Quebec, who already had done business with Tarboe, and next midnight Tarboe himself, with Gobal, Lafarge, Bissonnette, and another, came knocking at the banker's door, each carrying a keg on his shoulder, and armed to the teeth. And, what was singular, two stalwart police-officers walked behind with comfortable and approving looks.

A month afterwards Lafarge and Joan were married at the parish church at Isle of Days, and it was said that Mr. Martin, who, for some strange reason, was allowed to retain his position in the customs, sent a present. The wedding ended with a sensation, for just as the benediction was pronounced a loud report was heard beneath the floor of the church. There was a great commotion, but Tarboe whispered in the curé's ear, and he, blushing, announced that it was the bursting of a barrel. A few minutes afterwards the people of the parish knew the old hidingplace of Tarboe's contraband, and, though the curé rebuked them, they roared with laughter at the knowledge.

"So droll, so droll, our Tarboe there!" they

shouted, for already they began to look upon him as their seigneur.

In time the curé forgave him also.

Tarboe seldom left Isle of Days, save when he went to visit his daughter in St. Louis street, Quebec, not far from the Parliament House, where Orvay Lafarge is a member of the Ministry. The ex-smuggler was a member of the Assembly for three months, but after defeating his own party on a question of tariff, he gave a portrait of himself to the Chamber and threw his seat into the hands of his son-in-law. At the Belle Chatelaine, where he often goes, he sometimes asks Bissonnette to play "The Demoiselle with the Scarlet Hose."

A Romany of the Snows

I

When old Throng the trader, trembling with sickness and misery, got on his knees to Captain Halby and groaned, "She did n't want to go; they dragged her off; you 'll fetch her back, won't ye?—she always had a fancy for you, cap'n," Pierre shrugged a shoulder and said:

"But you stole her when she was in her rock-a-by, my Throng,—you and your Manette."

"Like a match she was—no bigger," continued the old man. "Lord, how that stepmother bully-ragged her, and her father did n't care a darn. He 'd half a dozen others—Manette and me had n't none. We took her and used her like as if she was an angel, and we brought her off up here. Have n't we set store by her? Was n't it 'cause we was lonely an' loved her we took her? Has n't everybody stood up and said there was n't anyone like her in the north? Ain't I done fair by her always

—ain't I? An' now, when this cough 's eatin' my life out, and Manette 's gone, and there ain't a soul but Duc the trapper to put a blister on to me, them brutes ride up from over the border, call theirselves her brothers, an' drag her off!"

He was still on his knees. Pierre reached over and lightly kicked a moccasined foot.

"Get up, Jim Throng," he said. "Holy! do you think the law moves because an old man cries? Is it in the statutes?—that 's what the law says. Does it come within the act? Is it a trespass?—an assault and battery?—a breach of the peace?—a misdemeanor? *Victoria—So and So:* that 's how the law talks. Get on your knees to Father Corraine, not to Captain Halby, Jimmy Throng!"

Pierre spoke in a half-sinister, ironical way, for between him and Captain Halby's Riders of the Plains there was no good feeling. More than once he had come into conflict with them—more than once had they laid their hands on him—and taken them off again in due time. He had foiled them as to men they wanted; he had defied them—but he had helped them, too, when it seemed right to him; he had sided with them once or twice when to do so was perilous to himself. He had sneered at them,

he did not like them, nor they him. The sum of it was, he thought them brave—and stupid; and he knew that the law erred as often as it set things right.

The trader got up and stood between the two men, coughing much, his face straining, his eyes bloodshot, as he looked anxiously from Pierre to Halby. He was the sad wreck of a strong man. Nothing looked strong about him now save his head, which, with its long grey hair, seemed badly balanced by the thin neck, through which the terrible cough was hacking.

"Only half a lung left," he stammered, as soon as he could speak, "an' Duc can't fix the boneset, camomile, and whiskey as *she* could. An' he waters the whiskey—curse—his—soul!" The last three words were spoken through another spasm of coughing. "An' the blister—how he mucks the blister!"

Pierre sat back on the table, laughing noiselessly, his white teeth shining. Halby, with one foot on a bench, was picking at the fur on his sleeve thoughtfully. His face was a little drawn, his lips were tight-pressed, and his eyes had a light of excitement. Presently he straightened himself, and after a half-malicious look at Pierre, he said to Throng:

"Where are they, do you say?"

"They 're at"—the old man coughed hard —"at Fort O'Battle."

"What are they doing there?"

"Waitin' till spring, when they 'll fetch their cattle up an' settle there."

"They want—Lydia—to keep house for them?"

The old man writhed.

"Yes, God's sake, that 's it! An' they want Liddy to marry a devil called Borotte, with a thousand cattle or so—Pito the courier told me yesterday. Pito saw her, an' he said she was white like a sheet, an' called out to him as he went by. Only half a lung I got, an' her boneset and camomile 'd save it for a bit, mebbe—mebbe!"

"It 's clear," said Halby, "that they trespassed, and they have n't proved their right to her."

"*Tonnerre!* what a thinker!" said Pierre, mocking.

Halby did not notice. His was a solid sense of responsibility.

"She is of age?" he half asked, half mused.

"She 's twenty-one," answered the old man, with difficulty.

"Old enough to set the world right," suggested Pierre, still mocking.

"She was forced away, she regarded you as her natural protector, she believed you her father: they broke the law," said the soldier.

"There was Moses, and Solomon, and Cæsar, and Socrates, and now . . . !" murmured Pierre in assumed abstraction.

A red spot burned on Halby's high cheek-bone for a minute, but he persistently kept his temper.

"I 'm expected elsewhere," he said at last. "I 'm only one man, I wish I could go today—even alone. But—"

"But you have a heart," said Pierre. "How wonderful—a heart! And there 's the half a lung, and the boneset and camomile tea, and the blister, and the girl with an eye like a spot of rainbow, and the sacred law in a Remington rifle! Well, well! And to do it in the early morning—to wait in the shelter of the trees till some go to look after the horses, then enter the house, arrest those inside, and lay low for the rest."

Halby looked over at Pierre astonished. Here was raillery and good advice all in a piece.

"It is n't wise to go alone, for if there 's trouble and I should go down, who 's to tell the truth? Two could do it; but one—no, it is n't wise, though it would look smart enough."

"Who said to go alone?" asked Pierre, scrawling on the table with a burnt match.

"I have no men."

Pierre looked up at the wall.

"Throng has a good Snider there," he said.

"Bosh! Throng can't go."

The old man coughed and strained.

"If it was n't—only—half a lung, and I could carry the boneset 'long with us.—"

Pierre slid off the table, came to the old man, and taking him by the arms, pushed him gently into a chair.

"Sit down; do n't be a fool, Jimmy Throng," he said. Then he turned to Halby: "You're a magistrate—make me a special constable; I 'll go, m'sieu' le capitaine—of no company."

Halby stared. He knew Pierre's bravery, his ingenuity and daring. But this was the last thing he expected: that the malicious, railing little half-breed would work with him and the law. Pierre seemed to understand his thoughts, for he said: "It is not for you. I am sick for adventure, and then there is mademoiselle—such a finger she has for a ven'son pudding."

Without a word Halby wrote on a leaf in his notebook, and presently handed the slip to Pierre. "That 's your commission as a special

constable," he said, "and here 's the seal on it." He handed over a pistol.

Pierre raised his eyebrows at it, but Halby continued: "It has the Government mark. But you 'd better bring Throng's rifle, too."

Throng sat staring at the two men, his hands nervously shifting on his knees. "Tell Liddy," he said, "that the last batch of bread was sour—Duc ain't no good—an' that I ain't had no relish sence she left. Tell her the cough gits lower down all the time. 'Member when she tended that felon o' yourn, Pierre?"

Pierre looked at a scar on his finger and nodded: "She cut it too young; but she had the nerve! When do you start, Captain? It 's an eighty-mile ride."

"At once," was the reply. "We can sleep to-night in the Jim-a-long-Jo" (a hut which the Company had built between two distant posts), "and get there at dawn day after tomorrow. The snow is light and we can travel quick. I have a good horse, and you—"

"I have my black Tophet. He 'll travel with your roan as on one snaffle-bar. That roan—you know where he come from?"

"From the Dolright stud, over the border."

"That 's wrong. He come from Greystop's

paddock, where my Tophet was foaled; they are brothers. Yours was stole and sold to the Gover'ment; mine was bought by good hard money. The law the keeper of stolen goods, eh? But these two will go cinch to cinch all the way, like two brothers—like you and me."

He could not help the touch of irony in his last words; he saw the amusing side of things, and all humour in him had a strain of the sardonic.

"Brothers-in-law for a day or two," answered Halby drily.

Within two hours they were ready to start. Pierre had charged Duc the incompetent upon matters for the old man's comfort, and had himself, with a curious sort of kindness, steeped the boneset and camomile in whisky, and set a cup of it near his chair. Then he had gone up to Throng's bedroom and straightened out and shook and "made" the corn-husk bed, which had gathered into lumps and rolls.

Before he came down he opened a door near by and entered another room, shutting the door, and sitting down on a chair. A stove-pipe ran through the room, and it was warm, though the window was frosted and the world seemed shut out. He looked round slowly, keenly, interested. There was a dressing-table

made of an old box; it was covered with pink calico, and muslin over this. A cheap looking-glass on it was draped with muslin and tied at the top with a bit of pink ribbon. A common bone comb lay near the glass, and, beside it, a beautiful brush with an ivory back and handle. This was the only expensive thing in the room. He wondered, but did not go near it—yet.

There was a little eight-day clock on a bracket which had been made by hand—pasteboard darkened with umber and varnished; a tiny little set of shelves made of the wood of cigar-boxes; and—alas! the shifts of poverty to be gay!—an easy-chair made of the staves of a barrel and covered with poor chintz. Then there was a photograph or two in little frames made from the red cedar of cigar-boxes, with decorations of putty, varnished, and a long panel screen of birch-bark of Indian workmanship. Some dresses hung behind the door. The bedstead was small, the frame was of hickory, with no footboard, ropes making the support for the husk tick. Across the foot lay a bedgown and a pair of stockings.

Pierre looked long, at first curiously; but after a little his forehead gathered and his lips drew in a little, as if he had a twinge of pain. He got up, went over near the bed, and picked

up a hairpin. Then he came back to the chair and sat down, turning it about in his fingers, still looking abstractedly at the floor.

"Poor Lucy!" he said presently; "the poor child! Ah! what a devil I was then—so long ago!"

This solitary room—Lydia's—had brought back the time he went to the room of his own wife, dead by her own hand, after an attempt to readjust the broken pieces of life, and sat and looked at the place which had been hers, remembering how he had left her with her wet face turned to the wall, and never saw her again till she was set free forever. Since that time he had never sat in a room sacred to a woman alone.

"What a fool, what a fool, to think!" he said at last, standing up; "but this girl must be saved. She must have her home here again."

Unconsciously he put the hairpin in his pocket, walked over to the dressing-table and picked up the hair brush. On its back was the legend, "*L. T. from C. H.*" He gave a whistle.

"So—so?" he said, "'C. H.' M'sieu' le capitaine, is it like that?"

A year before, Lydia had given Captain Halby a dollar to buy her a hair-brush at Winnipeg, and he had brought her one worth ten dollars. She had beautiful hair, and what pride

she had in using this brush! Every Sunday morning she spent a long time in washing, curling, and brushing her hair, and every night she tended it lovingly, so that it was a splendid rich brown like her eye, coiling nobly above her plain, strong face, with its good color.

Pierre, glancing in the glass, saw Captain Halby's face looking over his shoulder. It startled him, and he turned round. There was the face looking out from a photograph that hung on the wall in the recess where the bed was. He noted now that the likeness hung where the girl could see it the last thing at night and the first thing in the morning.

"So far as that, eh!" he said. "And m'sieu' is a gentleman, too. We shall see what he will do. He has his chance now once for all."

He turned, came to the door, softly opened it, passed out and shut it, then descended the stairs, and in half an hour was at the door with Captain Halby, ready to start. It was an exquisite winter day, even in its bitter coldness. The sun was shining clear and strong, all the plains glistened and looked like quicksilver, and the vast blue cup of sky seemed deeper than it had ever been. But the frost ate the skin like an acid, and when Throng came to the door Pierre drove him back instantly from the air.

"I only—wanted—to say—to Liddy," hacked the old man, "that I'm thinkin'—a little m'lasses'd kinder help—the boneset an' camomile. Tell her that the cattle 'll all be hers—an'—the house, an' I ain't got no one but—"

But Pierre pushed him back and shut the door, saying: "I 'll tell her what a fool you are Jimmy Throng."

The old man, as he sat down awkwardly in his chair, with Duc stolidly lighting his pipe and watching him, said to himself: "Yes, I be a durn fool; I be, I be!" over and over again. And when the dog got up from near the stove and came near to him, he added: "I be, Touser; I be a durn fool, for I ought to ha' stole two or three, an' then I 'd not be alone, an' nothin' but sour bread an' pork to eat. I ought to ha' stole three."

"Ah, Manette ought to have give you some of your own, it 's true, that!" said Duc stolidly. "You never was a real father, Jim."

"Liddy got to look like me; she got to look like Manette and me, I tell ye!" said the old man hoarsely.

Duc laughed in his stupid way. "Look like you! Look like you, Jim, with a face to turn milk sour! Ho, ho!"

Throng rose, his face purple with anger, and

made as if to catch Duc by the throat, but a fit of coughing seized him, and presently blood showed on his lips. Duc with a rough gentleness wiped off the blood and put the whisky and herbs to the sick man's lips, saying in a fatherly way:

"For why you do like that? You 're a fool, Jimmy!"

"I be, I be," said the old man in a whisper, and let his hand rest on Duc's shoulder.

"I 'll fix the bread sweet next time, Jimmy."

"No, no," said the husky voice peevishly. "She 'll do it—Liddy 'll do it. Liddy's comin'."

"All right, Jimmy! All right!"

After a moment Throng shook his head feebly and said, scarcely above a whisper:

"But I *be* a durn fool—when she 's not here."

Duc nodded and gave him more whisky and herbs.

"My feet 's cold," said the old man, and Duc wrapped a bearskin round his legs.

II

For miles Pierre and Halby rode without a word. Then they got down and walked for a couple of miles, to bring the blood into their legs again.

"The old man goes to By-by *bientot*," said Pierre at last.

"You do n't think he'll last long?"

"Maybe ten days; maybe one. If we do n't get the girl, out goes his torchlight straight."

"She 's been very good to him."

"He's been on his knees to her all her life."

"There'll be trouble out of this."

"Pshaw! The girl is her own master."

"I mean some one will probably get hurt over there." He nodded in the direction of Fort O'Battle.

"That 's in the game. The girl is worth fighting for, eh?"

"Of course, and the law must protect her. It 's a free country."

"So true, my captain," murmured Pierre drily. "It is wonderful what a man will do for the law."

The tone struck Halby. Pierre was scanning the horizon abstractedly.

"You are always hitting at the law," he said. "Why do you stand by it now?"

"For the same reason as yourself."

"What is that?"

"She has your picture in her room, she has my lucky dollar in her pocket."

Halby's face flushed, and then he turned and looked steadily into Pierre's eyes.

"We'd better settle this thing at once. If you're going to Fort O'Battle because you've set your fancy *there*, you'd better go back now. That's straight. You and I can't sail in the same boat. I'll go alone: so give me the pistol."

Pierre laughed softly, and waved the hand back.

"T'sh! What a high-cock-a-lorum! You want to do it all yourself—to fill the eye of the girl alone, and be tucked away to By-by for your pains—*mais, quelle folie!* See: you go for law and love; I go for fun and Jimmy Throng. The girl! Pshaw! she would come out right in the end, without you or me. But the old man with half a lung—that's different. He must have sweet bread in his belly when he dies, and the girl must make it for him. She shall brush her hair with the ivory brush by Sunday morning."

Halby turned sharply.

"You've been spying!" he said. "You've been in her room—you—"

Pierre put out his hand and stopped the word on Halby's lips.

"Slow, slow," he said; "we are both—police today. *Voilà!* we must not fight. There is Throng and the girl to think of." Suddenly, with a soft fierceness, he added: "If I looked in her room, what of that? In all the north is

there a woman to say I wrong her? No! Well, what if I carry her room in my eye; does that hurt her or you?"

Perhaps something of the loneliness of the outlaw crept into Pierre's voice for an instant, for Halby suddenly put a hand on his shoulder and said: "Let's drop the thing, Pierre."

Pierre looked at him musingly.

"When Throng is put to By-by what will you do?" he said.

"I will marry her, if she'll have me."

"But she is prairie-born, and you!"

"I'm a prairie-rider."

After a moment Pierre said, as if to himself: "So quiet and clean, and the print calico and muslin, and the ivory brush!"

It is hard to say whether he was merely working on Halby that he be true to the girl, or was himself soft-hearted for the moment. He had a curious store of legend and *chanson*, and he had the Frenchman's power of applying them, though he did it seldom. But now he said in a half monotone:

"Have you seen the way I have built my nest?
(*O brave and tall is the Grand Seigneur!*)
I have trailed the East, I have searched the West,
(*O clear of eye is the Grand Seigneur!*)
From South and North I have brought the best:

The feathers fine from an eagle's crest,
The silken threads from a prince's vest,
The warm rose-leaf from a maiden's breast—
(*O long he bideth, the Grand Seigneur*)."

They had gone scarce a mile farther when Pierre, chancing to turn round, saw a horseman riding hard after them. They drew up, and soon the man—a Rider of the Plains—was beside them. He had stopped at Throng's to find Halby, and had followed them. Murder had been committed near the border, and Halby was needed at once. Halby stood still, numb with distress, for there was Lydia. He turned to Pierre in dismay. Pierre's face lighted up with the spirit of fresh adventure. Desperate enterprises roused him; the impossible had a charm for him.

"I will go to Fort O'Battle," he said. "Give me another pistol."

"You cannot do it alone," said Halby, hope, however, in his voice.

"I will do it, or it will do me, *voilà!*" Pierre replied.

Halby passed over a pistol.

"I'll never forget it, on my honour! if you do it," he said.

Pierre mounted his horse and said, as if a thought had struck him: "If I stand for the

law in this, will you stand against it some time for me?"

Halby hesitated, then said, holding out his hand, "Yes, if it 's nothing dirty."

Pierre smiled. "Clean tit for clean tat," he said, touching Halby's fingers, and then, with a gesture and an *au revoir*, put his horse to the canter, and soon a surf of snow was rising at two points on the prairie, as the Law trailed south and east.

That night Pierre camped in the Jim-a-long-Jo, finding there firewood in plenty, and Tophet was made comfortable in the lean-to. Within another thirty hours he was hid in the woods behind Fort O'Battle, having traveled nearly all night. He saw the dawn break and the beginning of sunrise as he watched the Fort, growing every moment colder, while his horse trembled and whinnied softly, suffering also. At last he gave a little grunt of satisfaction, for he saw two men come out of the Fort and go to the corral. He hesitated a minute longer, then said: "I 'll not wait," patted his horse's neck, pulled the blanket closer round the beast, and started for the Fort. He entered the yard—it was empty. He went to the door of the Fort, opened it, entered, shut it, locked it softly, and put the key in his pocket. Then he passed

through into a room at the end of the small hallway. Three men rose from seats by the fire as he did so, and one said: "Hullo! who 're you?" Another added: "It 's Pretty Pierre."

Pierre looked at the table laid for breakfast, and said: "Where is Lydia Throng?"

The elder of the three brothers replied: "There 's no Lydia *Throng* here. There 's Lydia Bontoff, though, and in another week she 'll be Lydia something else."

"What does she say about it herself?"

"You 've no call to know."

"You stole her, forced her from Throng's—her father's house."

"She was n't Throng's; she was a Bontoff—sister of us."

"Well, she says *Throng*, and *Throng* it 's got to be."

"What have you got to say about it?"

At that moment Lydia appeared at the door leading from the kitchen.

"Whatever *she* has to say," answered Pierre.

"Who 're you talking for?"

"For her, for Throng, for the law."

"The law—by gosh, that 's good! You, you darned gambler; you scum!" said Caleb, the brother who knew him.

Pierre showed all the intelligent, resolute

coolness of a trained officer of the law. He heard a little cry behind him, and stepping sideways and yet not turning his back on the men, he saw Lydia.

"Pierre! Pierre!" she said in a half-frightened way, yet with a sort of pleasure lighting up her face; and she stepped forward to him. One of the brothers was about to pull her away, but Pierre whipped out his commission. "Wait!" he said. "That's enough. I'm for the law; I belong to the mounted police. I have come for the girl you stole."

The elder brother snatched the paper and read. Then he laughed loud and long. "So you've come to fetch her away," he said, "and this is how you do it!"—he shook the paper. "Well, by—" suddenly he stopped. "Come," he said, "have a drink, and don't be a dam' fool. She's our sister—old Throng stole her—and she's goin' to marry our partner. Here, Caleb, fish out the brandy-wine," he added to his younger brother, who went to a cupboard and brought the bottle.

Pierre, waving the liquor away, said quietly to the girl: "You wish to go back to your father, to Jimmy Throng?" He then gave her Throng's message, and added: "He sits there rocking in the big chair, and coughing—

coughing! and then there's the picture on the wall upstairs and the little ivory brush—"

She put out her hands towards him. "I hate them all here," she said. "I never knew them. They forced me away. I have no father but Jimmy Throng. I will not stay," she flashed out in sudden anger to the others; "I 'll kill myself and all of you before I marry that Borotte."

Pierre could hear a man tramping about upstairs. Caleb knocked on the stove-pipe, and called to him to come down. Pierre guessed it was Borotte. This would add one more factor to the game. He must move at once. He suddenly slipped a pistol into the girl's hand, and, with a quick word to her, stepped towards the door. The elder brother sprang between—which was what he looked for. By this time every man had a weapon showing, snatched from wall and shelf.

Pierre was cool. He said: "Remember, I am for the law. I am not one man. You are thieves now; if you fight and kill, you will get the rope, every one. Move from the door, or I'll fire. The girl comes with me." He had heard a door open behind him, now there was an oath and a report, and a bullet grazed his cheek and lodged in the wall beyond. He dared

not turn round, for the other men were facing him. He did not move, but the girl did. "Coward!" she said, and raised her pistol at Borotte, standing with her back against Pierre's.

There was a pause, in which no one stirred, and then the girl, slowly walking up to Borotte, her pistol levelled, said: "You low coward—to shoot a man from behind; and you want to be a decent girl's husband! These men that say they're my brothers, are brutes, but you're a sneak. If you stir a step, I'll fire."

The cowardice of Borotte was almost ridiculous. He dared not harm the girl, and her brothers could not prevent her harming him. Here there came a knocking at the front door. The other brothers had come and found it locked. Pierre saw the crisis, and acted instantly. "The girl and I—we will fight you to the end," he said, "and then what's left of you the law will fight to the end. Come," he added, "the old man can't live a week. When he's gone then you can try again. She will have what he owns. Quick, or I arrest you all, and then—"

"Let her go," said Borotte; "it ain't no use."

Presently the elder brother broke out laughing. "Damned if I thought the girl had the

pluck, an' damned if I thought Borotte was a crawler. Put an eye out of him, Liddy, an' come to your brother's arms. Here," he added to the others, "up with your popguns; this shindy's off; and the girl goes back till the old man tucks up. Have a drink!" he added to Pierre, as he stood his rifle in a corner and came to the table.

In half an hour Pierre and the girl were on their way, leaving Borotte quarrelling with the brothers, and all drinking heavily. The two arrived at Throng's late the next afternoon. There had been a slight thaw during the day, and the air was almost soft, water dripping from the eaves down the long icicles.

When Lydia entered, the old man was dozing in his chair. The sound of an axe out behind the house told where Duc was. The whisky-and-herbs was beside the sick man's chair, and his feet were wrapped about with bearskins. The girl made a little gesture of pain, and then stepped softly over and, kneeling, looked into Throng's face. The lips were moving.

"Dad," she said, "are you asleep?"

"I be a durn fool, I be," he said in a whisper, and then he began to cough. She took his hands. They were cold, and she rubbed them softly. "I feel so a'mighty holler," he

said, gasping, "an' that bread's sour agin." He shook his head pitifully.

His eyes at last settled on her, and he recognized her. He broke into a giggling laugh; the surprise was almost too much for his feeble mind and body. His hands reached and clutched hers. "Liddy! Liddy!" he whispered, then added peevishly, "The bread 's sour an' the boneset and camomile 's no good. . . . Ain't to-morrow bakin'-day?" he added.

"Yes, dad," she said, smoothing his hands.

"What danged—liars—they be—Liddy! You 're my gel, ain't ye?"

"Yes, dad. I 'll make some boneset liquor now."

"Yes, yes," he said, with childish eagerness and a weak, wild smile. "That 's it—that 's it."

She was about to rise, but he caught her shoulder. "I bin a good dad to ye, hain't I, Liddy?" he whispered.

"Always."

"Never had no ma but Manette, did ye?"

"Never, dad."

"What danged liars they be!" he said, chuckling.

She kissed him, and moved away to the fire to pour hot water and whisky on the herbs.

His eyes followed her proudly, shining like

wet glass in the sun. He laughed—such a wheezing, soundless laugh!

"He! he! he! I ain't no—durn—fool—bless—the Lord!" he said.

Then the shining look in his eyes became a grey film, and the girl turned round suddenly, for the long, wheezy breathing had stopped. She ran to him, and, lifting up his head, saw the look that makes even the fool seem wise in his cold stillness. Then she sat down on the floor, laid her head against the arm of his chair, and wept.

It was very quiet inside. From without there came the twang of an axe, and a man's voice talking to his horse. When the man came in he lifted the girl up, and, to comfort her, bade her go look at a picture hanging in her little room. After she was gone he lifted the body, put it on a couch and cared for it.

The Plunderer

It was no use: men might come and go before her, but Kitty Cline had eyes for only one man. Pierre made no show of liking her, and thought, at first, that hers was a passing fancy. He soon saw differently. There was that look in her eyes which burns conviction as deep as the furnace from which it comes: the hot, shy, hungering look of desire; most childlike, painfully infinite. He would rather have faced the cold mouth of a pistol; for he felt how it would end. He might be beyond wish to play the lover, but he knew that every man can endure being loved. He also knew that some are possessed—a dream, a spell, what you will—for their life long. Kitty Cline was one of these.

He thought he must go away, but he did not. From the hour he decided to stay misfortune began. Willie Haslam, the clerk at the Company's Post, had learned a trick or two at cards in the east, and imagined that he could, as he said himself "roast the cock o' the roost"—

meaning Pierre. He did so for one or two evenings, and then Pierre had a sudden increase of luck (or design), and the lad, seeing no chance of redeeming the I. O. U., representing two years' salary, went down to the house where Kitty Cline lived, and shot himself on the door-step.

He had had the misfortune to prefer Kitty to the other girls at Guidon Hill—though Nellie Sanger would have been as much to him, if Kitty had been easier to win. The two things together told hard against Pierre. Before, he might have gone; in the face of difficulty he certainly would not go. Willie Haslam's funeral was a public function: he was young, innocent-looking, handsome, and the people did not know what Pierre would not tell now—that he had cheated grossly at cards. Pierre was sure, before Liddall, the surveyor, told him, that a movement was apace to give him trouble—possibly fatal.

"You had better go!" said Liddall; "there's no use tempting Providence."

"They are tempting the devil," was the cool reply; "and that is not all joy, as you shall see."

He stayed. For a time there was no demonstration on either side. He came and went

through the streets, and was found at his usual haunts, to observers as cool and nonchalant as ever. He was a changed man, however. He never got away from the look in Kitty Cline's eyes. He felt the thing wearing on him, and he hesitated to speculate on the result; but he knew vaguely that it would end in disaster. There is a kind of corrosion which eats the granite out of the blood, and leaves fever.

"What is the worst thing that can happen a man, eh?" he said to Liddall one day, after having spent a few minutes with Kitty Cline.

Liddall was an honest man. He knew the world tolerably well. In writing once to his partner in Montreal he had spoken of Pierre as "an admirable, interesting scoundrel." Once when Pierre called him "*mon ami*," and asked him to come and spend an evening in his cottage, he said:

"Yes, I will go. But — pardon me — not as your friend. Let us be plain with each other. I never met a man of your stamp before—"

"A professional gambler—yes? *Bien?*"

"You interest me; I like you; you have great cleverness—"

"A priest once told me I had a great brain —there is a difference. Well?"

"You are like no man I ever met before.

Yours is a life like none I ever knew. I would rather talk with you than with any other man in the country, and yet—"

"And yet you would not take me to your home? That is all right. I expect nothing. I accept the terms. I know what I am and what you are. I like men who are square. You would go out of your way to do me a good turn."

It was on his tongue to speak of Kitty Cline, but he hesitated: it was not fair to the girl, he thought, though what he had intended was for her good. He felt he had no right to assume that Liddall knew how things were. The occasion slipped by.

But the same matter had been in his mind when, later, he asked, "What is the worst thing that can happen a man?"

Liddall looked at him long, and then said: "To stand between two fires."

Pierre smiled: it was an answer after his own heart. Liddall remembered it very well in the future.

"What is the thing to do in such a case?" Pierre asked.

"It is not good to stand still."

"But what if you are stunned, or do not care?"

"You should care. It is not wise to strain the situation."

Pierre rose, walked up and down the room once or twice, then stood still, his arms folded, and spoke in a low tone. "Once in the Rockies I was lost. I crept into a cave at night. I knew it was the nest of some wild animal; but I was nearly dead with hunger and fatigue. I fell asleep. When I woke—it was towards morning—I saw two yellow stars glaring where the mouth of the cave had been. They were all hate: like nothing you could imagine: passion as it is first made—yes. There was also a rumbling sound. It was terrible, and yet I was not scared. Hate need not disturb you—I am a quick shot. I killed that mountain lion, and I ate the haunch of deer I dragged from under her . . . "

He turned now, and, facing the doorway, looked out upon the village, to the roof of a house which they both knew. "Hate," he said, "is not the most wonderful thing. I saw a woman look once as though she could lose the whole world—and her own soul. She was a good woman. The man was bad—most: he never could be anything else. A look like that breaks the nerve. It is not amusing. In time the man

goes to pieces. But before that comes he is apt to do strange things. Eh, so!"

He sat down, and with his finger, wrote musingly in the dust upon the table.

Liddall looked keenly at him, and replied more brusquely than he felt: "Do you think it fair to stay—fair to *her*?"

"What if I should take her with me?" Pierre flashed a keen, searching look after the words.

"It would be useless devilry."

"Let us drink," said Pierre, as he came to his feet quickly; "then for the House of Lords" (the new and fashionable tavern).

They separated in the street, and Pierre went to the House of Lords alone. He found a number of men gathered before a paper pasted on a pillar of the verandah. Hearing his own name, he came nearer. A ranchman was reading aloud an article from a newspaper printed two hundred miles away. The article was headed "A Villainous Plunderer." It had been written by some one at Guidon Hill. All that was discreditable in Pierre's life it set forth with rude clearness; he was credited with nothing pardonable. In the crowd there were mutterings unmistakable to Pierre. He suddenly came among them,

caught a revolver from his pocket, and shot over the reader's shoulder six times into the pasted strip of newspaper.

The men dropped back. They were not prepared for warlike measures at the moment. Pierre leaned his back against the pillar and waited. His silence and coolness, together with an iron fierceness in his face, held them from instant demonstration against him; but he knew that he must face active peril soon. He pocketed his revolver and went up the hill to the house of Kitty Cline's mother. It was the first time he had ever been there. At the door he hesitated, but knocked presently, and was admitted by Kitty, who, at sight of him, turned faint with sudden joy, and grasped the lintel to steady herself.

Pierre quietly caught her about the waist, and shut the door. She recovered, and gently disengaged herself. He made no further advance, and they stood looking at each other for a minute; he, as one who had come to look at something good he was never to see again; she as at something she hoped to see forever. They had never before been where no eyes could observe them. He ruled his voice to calmness.

"I am going away," he said; "and I have come to say good-bye."

Her eyes never wavered from his. Her voice was scarce above a whisper.

"Why do you go? Where are you going?"

"I have been here too long. I am what they call a villain and a plunderer. I am going to—*mon Dieu*, I do not know!" He shrugged his shoulders, and smiled with a sort of helpless disdain.

She leaned her hands on the table before her. Her voice was still that low, clear murmur.

"What people say does n't matter." She staked her all upon her words. She must speak them, though she might hate herself afterwards. "Are you going alone?"

"Where I may have to go I must travel alone."

He could not meet her eyes now: he turned his head away. He almost hoped she would not understand.

"Sit down," he added; "I want to tell you of my life."

He believed that telling it as he should, she would be horror-stricken, and that the deep flame would die out of her eyes. Neither he nor she knew how long they sat there, he telling with grim precision of the evil life he had led. Her hands were clasped before her, and she shud-

dered once or twice, so that he paused; but she asked him firmly to go on.

When all was told he stood up. He could not see her face, but he heard her say:

"You have forgotten many things that were not bad. Let me say them." She named things that would have done honor to a better man. He was standing in the moonlight that came through the window. She stepped forward, her hands quivering out to him. "Oh, Pierre," she said, "I know why you tell me this; but it makes no difference — none. I will go with you wherever you go."

He caught her hands in his. She was stronger than he was now. Her eyes mastered him. A low cry broke from him, and he drew her almost fiercely into his arms.

"Pierre! Pierre!" was all she could say.

He kissed her again and again upon the mouth. As he did so, he heard footsteps and muffled voices without. Putting her quickly from him, he sprang towards the door, threw it open, closed it behind him, and drew his revolver. A half-dozen men faced him. Two bullets whistled by his head, and lodged in the door. Then he fired swiftly, shot after shot, and three men fell. His revolvers were empty. There were three men left. The case seemed all against

him now, but just here a shot, and then another, came from the window, and a fourth man fell. Pierre sprang upon one, and the other turned and ran. There was a short, sharp struggle: then Pierre rose up—alone.

The girl stood in the doorway. "Come, my dear," he said, "you must go with me now."

"Yes, Pierre," she cried, a mad light in her face. "I have killed men too—for you."

Together they ran down the hillside, and made for the stables of the Fort. People were hurrying through the long street of the town, and torches were burning, but they came by a roundabout to the stables safely. Pierre was about to enter, when a man came out. It was Liddall. He kept his horses there, and he had saddled one, thinking that Pierre might need it.

There were quick words of explanation, and then "Must the girl go too?" he asked. "It will increase the danger—besides—"

"I am going wherever he goes," she interrupted hoarsely; "I have killed men; he and I are the same now."

Without a word Liddall turned back, threw a saddle on another horse, and led it out quickly. "Which way?" he asked; "and where shall I find the horses?"

"West to the mountains. The horses you

will find at Tête Blanche Hill, if we get there. If not, there is money under the white pine at my cottage. Good bye!"

They galloped away. But there were mounted men in the main street, and one, well ahead of the others, was making towards the bridge over which they must pass. He reached it before they did, and set his horse crosswise in its narrow entrance. Pierre urged his mare in front of the girl's and drove straight at the head and shoulders of the obstructing horse. His was the heavier animal, and it bore the other down. The rider fired as he fell, but missed, and, in an instant, Pierre and the girl were over. The fallen man fired the second time, but again missed. They had a fair start, but the open prairie was ahead of them, and there was no chance to hide. Riding must do all, for their pursuers were in full cry. For an hour they rode hard. They could see their hunters not very far in the rear. Suddenly Pierre started and sniffed the air.

"The prairie's on fire!" he said exultingly, defiantly.

Almost as he spoke, clouds ran down the horizon, and then the sky lighted up. The fire travelled with incredible swiftness; they were hastening to meet it. It came on wavè-like, hurrying down at the right and the left as if to

close in on them. The girl spoke no word; she had no fear: what Pierre did she would do. He turned round to see his pursuers: they had wheeled and were galloping back the way they came. His horse and hers were travelling neck and neck. He looked at her with an intense, eager gaze.

"Will you ride on?" he asked eagerly. "We are between two fires." He smiled, remembering his words to Liddall.

"Ride on!" she urged in a strong, clear voice, a kind of wild triumph in it. "You shall not go alone."

There ran into his eyes now the same infinite look that had been in hers—that had conquered him. The flame rolling towards them was not brighter or hotter.

"For heaven or hell, my girl!" he cried, and they drove their horses on—on.

Far behind upon a divide the flying hunters from Guidon Hill paused for a moment. They saw with hushed wonder and awe a man and woman, dark and weird against the red light, ride madly into the flicking surf of fire.

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